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THE BIZZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

THE DEAD WHO WALK

by Ray Cummings

THE HAND OF GLORY

by R. H. D. Barham

JOHN BRUNNER

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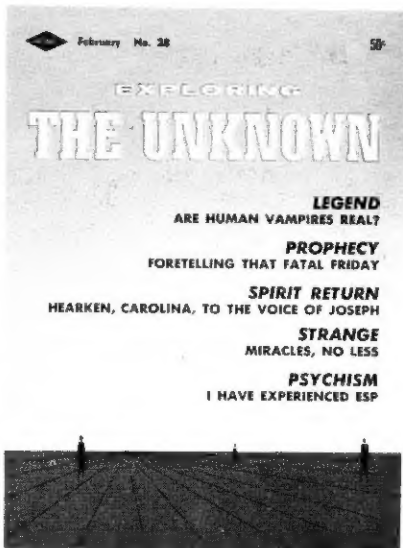
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Volume 2

CONTENTS FOR APRIL

Number 2

INTRODUCTION	4
THE BLACK LAUGH William J. Makin	5
THE HAND OF GLORY R. H. D. Barham	14
THE GARRISON David Grinnell	23
PASSEUR Robert W. Chambers	30
ORPHEUS'S BROTHER John Brunner	35
CASSILDA'S SONG (verse) Robert W. Chambers	43
THE LADY OF THE VELVET COLLAR Washington Irving	44
JACK Reynold Junker	50
THE BURGLAR-PROOF VAULT Oliver Taylor	59
THE DEAD WHO WALK (novelet) Ray Cummings	70
IT IS WRITTEN (Readers' Letters & Editor's Comment)	123
COMING NEXT ISSUE	125

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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Introduction

Those of you who have been asking for weird verse, and your numbers have been increasing recently, will be pleased to see two examples in this issue. There is no denying that fine examples exist in literature, both of a serious nature and of the more entertaining sort, as you will find in R. H. D. Barham's **The Hand of Glory**. According to your pleasure, as expressed in your comments, we may offer both types in future issues. If and when we do, long narrative poems, such as the Barham, will be presented as if they were stories, on the contents page, while the designation "verse" will be reserved for the shorter filler type. The latter will be used when space is left open, but so far as new examples go, we shall not select any solely for the purpose of filling space. They will have to strike your editor as being at least as memorable as the Chambers'.

We confess to error in respect to Chambers' tales which referred to the "King in Yellow", as we had previously stated that there were only three such stories, and add a warning to collectors. The book, **The King In Yellow**, has long been out of print, though copies turn up now and then in second-hand stores. The copy I have is the 1902 edition, published by Harper & Brothers, New York, and it has been many years since I looked at the earlier, 1895 edition. It was only upon investigation, after several readers had insisted that Chambers' king features in still another story that I discovered that **In The Court Of The Dragon** (the story cited) apparently was dropped from the 1902 edition, as it is not there. In response to your requests, we shall present this story as soon as possible.

Robert A. W. Lowndes

The Black Laugh

by William J. Makin

While we do not claim to be one hundred percent impervious to the shudder that is supposed to come from reading weird and eerie fiction, we can honestly say that very few out of the thousands of chilling tales we've read have actually frightened us. But this tale of South Africa in the 30's is one that never fails to produce cold grue in us.

I AWOKE with a start. There was blackness all around except for the dull red glow of the camp fire, now almost smothered in white ash. The awful stillness of the veld and that impenetrable darkness told me that it was the hour before dawn. A dreadful hour, and one that always finds me unprepared.

What had awakened me? I lifted my head from my sleeping bag and saw the vague, shadowy forms of my companions stretched in a deathlike stupor in a circle about the

smoldering fire. Above was an empty blackness that had extinguished the stars. And, about me, that awful stillness that emphasized the miles of wilderness.

Then, tearing the stillness, came that rumbling laugh, a laugh that began in the depths and cackled to hysterical heights. A black laugh. It was that which had awakened me.

Again that laugh rose in its crescendo. I twisted my head in the direction of the camp fire round which were grouped our native "boys". A shadow moved.

One of the natives was cackling horribly.

"For God's sake, stop that laughing!"

Maxwell, his fair hair all tousled, had leaped from his sleeping bag and was shrieking his command into the night. "Stop it, I say! Stop it!"

Dead silence followed. The laugh was lost in the stillness. One of the sleeping forms grunted uneasily. That was all.

But I was astounded at the appearance of Maxwell. Standing there in shirt and shorts, he was trembling like a man with a bad attack of malaria. He shook his fist into that empty blackness, and cursed. I half rose from my sleeping bag.

"What's the matter?"

His eyes glinted at me savagely. He did not speak, but walked to the camp fire, kicked some of the ash away, flung some logs into the embers, and then returned to his sleeping bag to sit upon it. He was still shaking as he sat there, all hunched up, as though expecting some terror would launch itself out of the darkness like a leaping leopard.

"That laugh!" he muttered. "You heard it?"

"Yes. One of the Kaffirs. Something funny came into his mind, I suppose. I wish it hadn't. There'll be no more sleep for me."

"Nor for me," groaned Maxwell.

"Man, you're shivering."

"I know. That laugh comes to me like a curse. A black laugh. Ugh!"

AS ONE OF the logs in the fire began to crackle and blaze I could see the tense look in the face of Maxwell.

"Well, if you're going to be upset by a laughing Kaffir," I began jocularly, "the sooner you get out of Africa, the better. These Kaffirs are always laughing. They're happy, even though they are carrying the white man's burden."

But Maxwell refused to come out of his serious mood. He stared into the fitful blaze.

"Ever trekked in the Drakensberg district?" he asked suddenly.

I shook my head.

"I know it only vaguely," I replied. "Somewhere on the borders of Natal, eh?"

"That's it, said Maxwell eagerly. He obviously wanted to talk. Men do become communicative round a camp fire, and this hour before the dawn invited confidences.

"I used to know the country round there very well five years ago. Five years ago! I've never been back there since."

There was such intensity in the tone of his voice that I looked up quickly from the filling of my pipe.

"Why?" I asked. "A girl?"

He shook his head slowly.

"No. It was a laugh, a black

laugh, that drove me out of the Drakensberg."

I think I must have chuckled.

"Really, Maxwell," I said, "are you serious?"

"Deadly serious."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I can't imagine —" I began.

"Have you ever seen that peculiar kind of kopje that slopes up like a gentle hill for about five hundred feet and then shoots up a straight wall of rock for another five hundred feet?"

"Of course," I nodded. "It's not really peculiar, that kind of kopje. You will find it in different parts of the veld. But I know the kind you mean — rather like a giant sarcophagus on a huge mound, eh?"

"A sarcophagus!" muttered Maxwell. "Yes, at sunset this looked like an enormous coffin. Horrible!"

"Had it a name?"

He turned his eyes towards me. They were lit up by the flicker of a flame. "It was called — Spook Kopje."

THERE WAS silence for a moment. The breathing of our companions in their sleeping bags sounded regular and sonorous.

"I was staying in a Boer home-
stead, not half a mile from that kopje," went on Maxwell, hesi-
tantly. "I was doing nothing in
particular — not even prospect-
ing. I rather enjoyed the quiet-
ness, the humdrum life of the

farm, the unbounded hospitality
of the Boer family with whom I
stayed. A real rest."

I nodded.

"A colored girl from the Cape,
Olivia, looked after me. Brought
the morning tea, prepared my
meals, mended my socks, and so
on. A good girl, and quite attrac-
tive. Something of a beauty for
the neighborhood, and courted
by all the black farm boys in
the vicinity. But she looked
down upon them. 'Dis black
trash not good enough for me,'
she said decisively. And having
said this she would go back to
her pots and pans, humming an
old missionary tune.

"She certainly seemed in no
hurry to get herself a sweetheart.
And a good thing, too, for the
Boer, Oom Jannie, and his fam-
ily. They depended more and
more on Olivia. She was un-
doubtedly a household treasure.
But when Johannes came into
the district, she changed. Jo-
hannes was not the sort of man
to let himself go unnoticed."

"And who was Johannes?" I
asked, puffing away at my pipe,
determined now that Maxwell
had launched upon his story,
that I would hear all the details.

"Johannes was a young col-
ored man, also from the Cape,"
explained Maxwell. "He arrived
in the Drakensberg district in a
checked suit, a red beret, and a
monocle stuck in his eye. He
lived in Cape Town where he
owned three hansom cabs that

did a flourishing business after midnight. And he knew how to talk about himself and his hansom cabs, too. He had drifted to these parts for a holiday, apparently.

"HE HAD NOT been in the district three hours before he discovered Olivia. And he began to court her. Needless to say, Olivia fell blindly for the red beret, the monocle, and the three hansom cabs. At the end of the second day she possessed the red beret. It seemed certain that before another week had passed she would possess the three hansom cabs as well. The black farm boys of the district hated this successful interloper."

I smiled at Maxwell, but his face still had that serious, intent expression.

"But although Olivia was practically conquered from the beginning, she still had a lurking feminine desire to see her cavalier of the red beret perform some doughty deed. Three hansom cabs were worth having, but Olivia also wanted a man. In her days at the Cape she had regularly visited the cinema, and her hero of the screen was Douglas Fairbanks."

"I should think it would be Valentino," I murmured.

"Not with Olivia. She adored the leaping antics of her hero, she thrilled when he flung himself to the top of a wall and

crashed down again upon his pursuers. This was a man, and the sort of man that Olivia had decided to marry. Johannes was hardly that. Probably he had never climbed higher than the driver's seat of one of his own hansom cabs. But his talk was dizzying enough, and Olivia's mention of her hero encouraged his boastfulness. 'I can jump, I can swim, I can climb,' he announced to her. 'Why, each Sunday on Table Mountain I have climbed where even der Europeans will not go. *Allemagtig*, I —'

"'Could you climb that?' asked Olivia carelessly. They were out on the veld, walking within a hundred yards of that sinister-looking kopje, Spook Kopje.

"Johannes gave it one glance, and laughed. 'Why, dat is nothing,' he said. 'I climb dat in half an hour. Now, on Table Mountain, I once climbed and —'

"'You certain dat you could climb dat kopje?' persisted Olivia.

"AGAIN JOHANNES laughed. He was so certain that he did not even turn his head to look at the kopje again. Instead, he gazed boldly into the soft brown eyes of Olivia.

"'In half an hour,' he repeated.

"Olivia looked at him. 'No one has ever climbed dat kopje,' she said quietly. 'No one.'

"'No?' Johannes was not dis-

turbed. "When I take you back to Cape Town, I —"

"Will you climb dat kopje for me?" asked Olivia, excitedly.

"Johannes looked at her, and then decided he had better look at this kopje again. He turned his head and regarded it. In the stark sunlight it looked forbidding enough — the gentle slope, and then the granite cliffs climbing straight for the blue silk of the sky.

"Of course, I will," he said, carelessly. But he didn't mean it. Olivia did, however. She saw Johannes in a blaze of glory. She was quite right in her assertion that no one had ever climbed that kopje. In the memory of all in the district there had been only three attempts to climb Spook Kopje, and all had failed. One man had killed himself. Sheep had strayed up the slopes and failed to find their way back again. They had perished miserably from hunger. Since the last fatal attempt, Spook Kopje had been left severely alone.

"Climb dat kopje, and when you come down I marry you," said Olivia. And she meant it.

"Again Johannes regarded the kopje. He was beginning to feel uncomfortable about the affair. But somewhere deep down in him, beneath that boastfulness, there was a strain that urged him to live up to the hero-worship of his sweetheart.

"All right, I do it," he said.

"When?" persisted Olivia.

"When you like."

"Tomorrow morning, at ten?"

"Yes."

"AND SO IT was settled. Olivia told me the gist of this conversation, excitedly, as she served me my supper. Here was a hero worthy of the films — and of Olivia. 'My man is some man,' she told me definitely. Oom Jannie shook his head over this folly. 'Aach! Vhy do you want him to climb a kopje?' he asked testily. Olivia did not reply, but brought him his huge Bible that he read regularly each evening by candlelight."

Maxwell stopped talking. The night was still dark and soundless. He walked over to the fire and kicked another log into the blaze. Then he came back and sat on his sleeping bag again.

"Did Johannes climb the kopje?" I asked at last.

Maxwell nodded.

"Yes, he did. Incredible. But it took him more than half an hour. Five hours, in fact. One has to admire the achievement. The Lord knows how he did it. But there, in the late afternoon, we could see him on the top of that granite wall waving the red beret which Olivia had given him as a talisman. We grouped ourselves to watch him — Oom Jannie and his family, two neighboring farmers, three black farm hands, and myself. And among us strutted Olivia, proud of her hero, proud of his

achievement, and not a little proud of herself. We waved back to the hero with the red beret."

Again silence.

"Well? Did they live happily ever after?" I asked.

Maxwell turned his brooding gaze upon me.

"Johannes never came back," he said briefly.

"But if he climbed to the top," I said, "surely he could —"

"He never came back," repeated Maxwell, monotonously.

"Olivia waited for him, we all waited for him to give him the welcome he deserved. But he did not come."

"But you could see him," I persisted.

Maxwell nodded.

"We watched that red blob of a beret trying to find a way down those granite cliffs for the rest of the afternoon. We watched until a saffron glow in the sky silhouetted Spook Kopje and made it once again a long black coffin. The glow changed swiftly into night, and still Johannes had not returned. Obviously, he had not found it as easy to descend as to climb. He may have missed his way or, what is more likely, lost his nerve. But he did not return that night although Olivia sat whimpering with a lighted candle, waiting for him until the dawn.

"IN THE EARLY morning we watched the mist smoking away

from the kopje. Again the granite cliffs were lit up by the stark sunlight. We searched anxiously. It was Oom Jannie, old as he was, who saw him first. He pointed a gnarled forefinger at the kopje.

"*'Daar is hij'*" he muttered.

"We followed his pointed finger. At last I saw him. The red blob of a beret. Johannes had clung to that throughout the night. He was still on the heights, still on the sinister summit of that kopje. But he had traversed the top from one end to the other. He was still seeking a route to descend.

"At this glimpse of him we shouted and waved. Olivia shrilled and screamed. 'My man, my hero!' she yelled. But the figure with the red beret took no notice. Not at first. But, as the sun climbed higher he saw us. He waved in reply; waved the red beret. But it was a tired gesture; the last *panache*. He was dispirited and anxious. For the rest of the time he held the red beret limply in his hand.

"Olivia completely abandoned her pots and pans. She stood in the doorway of the farmhouse, staring into the sunshine at that restless red blob on the kopje. We tried to comfort her with assurances. 'He'll be down for dinner, the young fool,' grunted Oom Jannie in her hearing. It helped her a little, that remark. But she refused to leave her post in the doorway.

"All through the afternoon, with my field glasses, I watched Johannes trailing desperately about the kopje. Yes, I could see he had become desperate. The owner of the three hansom cabs at the Cape had to get down or he would die of hunger and exposure. At first, I let Olivia watch him through the field glasses, but as the man became more and more desperate in his efforts to find a way down to earth I kept them to myself. Olivia began to weep. But she was not weeping, she was crooning those missionary hymns to herself. 'Lord, bring him back to me,' I heard her saying, over and over again. There was no use trying to comfort her, and, disheartened, I went inside.

"LATE THAT afternoon, I went myself up the slopes of that cursed kopje in the hope that I might help Johannes in some way. I toiled with two farm boys to the foot of those granite cliffs that went sheer into the sky. I marveled that the colored youth from the Cape had found a foothold of any kind. I traversed those cliffs from end to end, on each side of the kopje, but retired baffled again and again to the slopes. I tried three crevices, but each led to more sheer rock. I nearly broke my neck twice on that expedition. I returned in the darkness to the farmhouse and the weeping Olivia."

A log fell noisily into the fire. Sparks shot upwards to the black sky.

"How long did this last?" I asked.

Maxwell shivered again.

"I think it must have been the third night that Johannes went crazy. I was awakened in the silence of the night by a horrible yelling laugh that resounded again and again across the empty veld. I never heard such a blood-curdling laugh, coming from the depths and ending in a scream. A black laugh! The laugh that wakened me half an hour ago. Ghastly!"

Maxwell covered his face with his hands. It was some moments before he could continue.

"When I first heard that mad laugh I rushed out of the house onto the veld. Instinctively I looked towards Spook Kopje. Moonlight bathed it, so that the granite cliffs looked black and slimy. But there, on the top, was a prancing figure, a figure that laughed and yelled, and danced. It was Johannes. He was mad, and half naked, but still clinging to the red beret. I heard a stifled scream at my side. It was Olivia. She also had heard that black laugh, and realized at once the full horror of it all.

"'My man! Johannes! I so sorry,' she whimpered, and then crumpled into a faint at my feet.

"Oom Jannie, too, looking like a stern ghost in his old night-

shirt, had wandered out of the house.

"This is terrible . . . terrible!" he muttered. He stared at the kopje in the moonlight. 'Something must be done,' he muttered again.

"THE NEXT day five of us, all white men, made a desperate assault on the kopje. We tried again and again to scale those damnable cliffs, and again and again we failed. Baffled and dispirited we returned to the plains in the evening. And the mad, naked figure on the kopje kept up its yelling and screaming and dancing throughout. We all hoped that, mercifully, in this mad state Johannes would pitch down the cliffs and kill himself. But the man seemed to be possessed of an amazing amount of endurance. He lived, and kept up his black laughter throughout the night.

Of course, every farm in the vicinity was terrorized by that horrible laugh at night. It kept us all awake, and the women folk were hysterical. Olivia had not slept since Johannes climbed the kopje. We were all waiting for the poor devil to die, and he refused to die. The madness seemed to have given him a new lease of life.

"At last, Oom Jannie called the other farmers to a conference in the *eetkamer* of his farmhouse. I will not weary you with the discussion that took place

there. But a terrible decision was made. We all emerged from the *eetkamer* with rifles under our arms. All except Oom Jannie. He carried a Prayer Book. Outside the door of the *eetkamer* crouched Olivia. She gazed at us dumbly. Her sad dark eyes traveled from our faces to the guns under our arms. At once she understood the terrible thing we were about to do. With a shriek she flung herself at the feet of Oom Jannie. He gazed down at her with a stern face, but tears were in his rheumy eyes. 'God's will be done,' he muttered, and gently thrust her aside.

"We all proceeded to the foot of that kopje with its mad, naked figure in a red beret still shrieking defiance of death and dancing hysterically on the edge of those granite cliffs. Slowly and deliberately we toiled up the slope, and at last we came to the sheer granite. Oom Jannie sat himself on a boulder. The others took up their positions. I sprawled on the ground and rested my cheek against the stock of my rifle.

"'Sight. Three hundred yards" I muttered mechanically to myself.

"The mad, prancing figure of Johannes was an easy mark. The red beret which still covered his head helped. I groped for cartridges in my pocket. I heard the 'click — click' as the others slipped the cartridges into the

magazines of the rifles which were being trained on the mad, laughing man.

"SITTING ON the boulder, Oom Jannie deliberately opened his Prayer Book. We had to wait while he adjusted his spectacles. He could never read without his spectacles. Then in a firm and reverent voice he began slowly to read the burial service in Dutch.

"Daar het de almachtige God, de Heer van leven en dood, behaagd heeft de geest van onze ontslapen broeder te doen weder keren tot God. . . ."

"You know how it goes in English: 'As it has pleased the almighty God, the Lord of living and dead, to let the spirit of our deceased brother return to God.

... 'Crack!' The first rifle had spoken.

"... die hem gegeven heeft, en die gesproken heeft ..." continued Oom Jannie deliberately.

"'Crack! Crack!' Two more rifles spoke.

"The naked figure in the red beret continued to dance and shriek madly.

"'Allemagtig! My hand shakes,' cursed one Boer.

"I sighted on the red beret. Crack! I had missed.

"... stoft zyt gy, en tot zult gy wederken. ..."

"'Crack! Crack!'

"And so it continued in the stark sunlight We must each have fired five rounds before the end came. We saw the figure in the red beret stagger, and then pitch down.

"... bevonded moogt worden in vrede," concluded Oom Jannie softly, and closed the Prayer Book.

"Half an hour later we were back in the homestead."

A long silence followed. The campfire blazed merrily. The sky was paling. Dawn had come. Maxwell sat hunched on his sleeping bag. Neither of us spoke for some time.

"And you never went back there again?" I asked.

Maxwell shook his head.

"Never. I left the next day."

"And Olivia?"

"I heard she went back to her pots and pans. She is now a silent, moody woman. She will never marry. Each evening she walks to that kopje and stares at the heights where lie the bones of the man she loved. And they do say," added Maxwell, "that a mad laugh is often heard coming from those strange heights of Spook Kopje. And that laugh portends evil."

I heard a deep chuckle behind me. Startled, I turned. The black face of my Kaffir servant grinned at me.

"Good morning, baas!" he said. "Coffeel!"

The sleepers began to awake.

The Hand Of Glory

by R. H. D. Barham

The Ingoldsby Legends or Mirth and Marvels, by Thomas Ingoldsby, first appeared in 1840 — the introductory note to Richard Bentley, Esq., signed Thomas Ingoldsby is dated "Tappington Everard, Jan. 20th, 1840." Squire Ingoldsby starts out saying, "You wish me to collect into a single volume certain rambling extracts from our family memoranda, many of which have already appeared in the pages of your Miscellany. At the same time you tell me that doubts are entertained in certain quarters as to the authenticity of their details." He goes on too refer to the original documents allegedly in his possession from which these tales are drawn, all verifiable family records which members of the general public are welcome to inspect. A second series appeared circa 1842 (Ingoldsby's letter, referring to the favorable reception the first series received, states "the old oak chest is not empty yet", and the date given is Dec. 16th, 1842). The introduction to the third series, however, is signed by R. H. D. Barham — dated Nov. 17th, 1847 — and gives the appearance that (a) the two earlier series were the work of "the late Mr. Barham" writing under the name of Thomas Ingoldsby (b) this contains the balance of the material. The "new edition" from which the following narrative is taken, was published by Richard Bentley in London, 1858. While there are a number of stories and sketches in prose, the bulk of the material is narrative verse, of which the item we present here is a fair sample. Various authors of weird and horror fiction have used the "hand of glory" theme — notably Seabury Quinn and August Derleth — and the first such tale I ever read (Quinn's) quoted the spell from Ingoldsby. We are particularly interested in your reactions to this material, since there are some other particularly good tales in the volume which we can present if you would like to see them.

On the lone bleak moor
At the midnight hour,
Beneath the Gallows Tree,
Hand in hand
The Murderers stand
By one, by two, by three!
And the Moon that night
With a grey, cold light
Each baleful object tips;
One half of her form
Is seen through the storm,
The other half's in Eclipse!
And the cold Wind howls,
And the Thunder growls,
And the Lightning is broad and bright;
And altogether
It's very bad weather,
And an unpleasant sort of a night!
"Now mount who list,
And close by the wrist
Sever me quickly the Dead Man's fist! —
Now climb who dare
Where he swings in air,
And pluck me five locks of the Dead Man's hair!"

* * * * *

There's an old woman dwells upon Tappington Moor,
She hath years on her back at least the fourscore,
And some people fancy a great many more;
Her nose it is hook'd,
Her back it is crook'd,
Her eyes blear and red:
On the top of her head
Is a mutch, and on that
A shocking bad hat,
Extinguisher-shaped, the brim narrow and flat!
Then — My Gracious! — her beard! — it would sadly perplex
A spectator at first to distinguish her sex;
Nor, I'll venture to say, without scrutiny could he
Pronounce her, off-handed, a Punch or a Judy,
Did you see her, in short, that mud-hovel within,
With her knees to her nose, and her nose to her chin,

Leering up with that queer, indescribable grin,
You'd lift up your hands in amazement, and cry,
"— Well! — I never *did* see such a regular Guy!"

And now before
That old Woman's door,
Where nought that's good may be,
Hand in hand,
The Murderers stand
By one, by two, by three!
Oh! 'tis a horrible sight to view
In that horrible hovel, that horrible crew,
By the pale blue glare of that flickering flame,
Doing the deed that hath never a name!
'Tis! awful to hear
Those words of fear!
The prayer muttered backwards, and said with a sneer!
(Matthew Hopkins himself has assured us that when
A witch says her prayers, she begins with "Amen.")
— 'Tis awful to see
On that Old Woman's knee
The dead, shrivell'd hand, as she clasps it with glee! —
And now, with care,
The five locks of hair
From the skull of the Gentleman dangling up there,
With the grease and the fat
Of a black Tom Cat
She hastens to mix,
And to twist into wicks,
And one on the thumb, and each finger to fix. —
(For another recipe the same charm to prepare,
Consult Mr. Ainsworth and *Petit Albert*.)

"Now open lock
To the Dead Man's knock!
Fly bolt, and bar, and band! —
Nor move, nor swerve
Joint, muscle, or nerve,
At the spell of the Dead Man's hand!
Sleep All who sleep! — Wake all who wake! —
But be as the Dead for the Dead Man's sake;"

All is silent! all is still,
 Save the ceaseless moan of the bubbling rill
 As it wells from the bosom of Tappington Hill;
 And in Tappington Hall
 Great and Small,
 Gentle and Simple, Squire and Groom,
 Each one hath sought his separate room,
 And sleep her dark mantle hath o'er them cast,
 For the midnight hour hath long been past!

All is darksome in earth and sky,
 Save, from yon casement, narrow and high,
 A quivering beam
 On the tiny stream
 Plays, like some taper's fitful gleam
 By one that is watching wearily.

Within that casement, narrow and high,
 In his secret lair, where none may spy,
 Sits one whose brow is wrinkled with care,
 And the thin grey locks of his failing hair
 Have left his little bald pate bare;
 For his full-bottomed wig
 Hangs, bushy and big,
 On the top of his old-fashioned, high-back'd chair.
 Unbraced are his clothes,
 Ungarter'd his hose,
 His gown is bedizen'd with tulip and rose,
 Flowers of remarkable size and hue,
 Flowers such as Eden never knew;
 — And there, by many a sparkling heap
 Of the good red gold,
 The tale is told
 What powerful spells avails to keep
 That careworn man from his needful sleep!

Haply, he deems no eyes can see
 As he gloats on his treasure greedily —
 The shining store
 Of glittering ore,
 The fair Rose-Noble, the bright Moidore,
 And the broad Double-Joe from ayont the sea —
 But there's one that watches as well as he;

For, wakeful and sly,
In a closet hard by,
On his truckle bed lieth a little Foot-page,
A boy who's uncommonly sharp of his age,
Like young Master Horner,
Who erst in a corner
Sat eating a Christmas pie:
And, while that Old Gentleman's counting his hoards,
Little Hugh peeps through a crack in the boards!

* * * * *

There's a voice in the air,
There's a step on the stair,
The old man starts in his cane-back'd chair;
At the first faint sound
He gazes around,
And holds up his dip of sixteen to the pound.
Then half arose
From beside his toes
His little pug-dog with his little pug nose,
But, ere he can vent an inquisitive sniff,
That little pug-dog stands stark and stiff,
For low, yet clear,
Now fall on the ear,
— Where once pronounced for ever they dwell —
The unholy words of the Dead Man's spell!

"Open lock
To the Dead Man's knock!
Fly bolt, and bar, and band! —
Nor move, nor swerve
Joint, muscle, or nerve,
At the spell of the Dead Man's hand!
Sleep All who sleep! — Wake all who wake! —
But be as the Dead for the Dead Man's sake!"

Now lock, nor bolt, nor bar avails,
Nor stout oak panel thick-studded with nails.
Heavy and harsh the hinges creak.
Though they had been oil'd in the course of the week;
The door opens wide as wide may be,
And there they stand,
That murderous band,

Lit by the light of the GLORIOUS HAND,
By one! — by two! — by three!

They have pass'd through the porch, they have pass'd through the
hall,

Where the Porter sat snoring against the wall;

The very snore froze

In his very snub nose,

You'd have verily deem'd he had snored his last

E'en the little wee mouse, as it ran o'er the mat

When the GLORIOUS HAND by the side of him pass'd!

At the top of its speed to escape from the cat,

Though half dead with affright,

Paused in its flight;

And the cat that was chasing that little wee thing

Lay crouch'd as a statue in act to spring!

And now they are there,

On the head of the stair,

And the long crooked whittle is gleaming and bare!

— I really don't think any money would bribe

Me the horrible scene that ensued to describe,

Or the wild, wild glare

Of that old man's eye,

His dumb despair,

And deep agony.

The kid from the pen, and the lamb from the fold,

Unmoved may the blade of the butcher behold;

They dream not — ah, happier they! — that the knife,

Though uplifted, can menace their innocent life;

It falls — the frail thread of their being is riven,

They dread not, suspect not, the blow till 'tis given. —

But, oh! what a thing 'tis to see and to know

That the bare knife is raised in the hand of the foe,

Without hope to repel, or to ward off the blow!

— Enough! — let's pass over as fast as we can

The fate of that grey, that unhappy old man!

But fancy poor Hugh,

Aghast at the view,

Powerless alike to speak or do!

In vain doth he try

To open the eye

That is shut, or close that which is clapt to the chink,
Though he'd give all the world to be able to wink! —
No! — for all that this world can give or refuse,
I would not be now in that little boy's shoes,
Or indeed any garment at all that is Hugh's!
— 'Tis lucky for him that the chink in the wall
He has peeped through so long, is so narrow and small!

Wailing voices, sounds of woe
Such as follow departing friends,
That fatal night round Tappington go,
Its long-drawn roofs and its gable ends;
Ethereal Spirits, gentle and good,
Aye weep and lament o'er a deed of blood.

• • • • •

'Tis early dawn — the morn is grey,
And the clouds and the tempest have pass'd away,
And all things betoken a very fine day;
But, while the lark her carol is singing,
Shrieks and screams are through Tappington ringing!

Upstarting all,
Great and small.

Each one who's found within Tappington Hall,
Gentle and Simple, Squire or Groom,
All seek at once that old Gentleman's room;

And there, on the floor,
Drench'd in its gore,

A ghastly corpse lies exposed to the view,
Carotid and jugular both cut through!

And there, by its side,
'Mid the crimson tide,

Kneels a little Foot-page of tenderest years;
Adown his pale cheek the fast-falling tears
Are coursing each other round and big,
And he's staunching the blood with a full-bottom'd wig!
Alas! and alack for his staunching! — 'tis plain,
As anatomists tell us, that never again
Shall life revisit the foully slain,
When once they've been cut through the jugular vein.

• • • • •

There's a hue and a cry through the County of Kent,
And in chace of the cut-throats a Constable's sent,
But no one can tell the man which way he went:
There's a little Foot-page with the Constable goes,
And a little pug-dog with a little pug nose.

• • • • •

In Rochester town,
At the sign of the Crown,
Three shabby-genteel men are just sitting down
To a fat stubble-goose, with potatoes done brown;
When a little Foot-page
Rushes in, in a rage,
Upsetting the apple-sauce, onions, and sage.
The little Foot-page takes the first by the throat,
And a little pug-dog takes the next by the coat,
And a Constable seizes the one more remote;
And fair rose-nobles and broad moidores,
The Waiter pulls out of their pockets by scores,
And the Boots and the Chambermaids run in and stare;
And the Constable says, with a dignified air,
"You're *wanted*, Gen'lemen, one and all,
For that 'ere precious lark at Tappington Hall!"

There's a black gibbet frowns upon Tappington Moor,
Where a former black gibbet has frown'd before:

It is black as black may be
And murderers there
Are dangling in air,
By one! — by two! — by three!

There's a horrid old hag in a steeple-crown'd hat,
Round her neck they have tied to a hempen cravat
A dead Man's hand, and a dead Tom Cat!
They have tied up her thumbs, they have tied up her toes,
They have tied up her eyes, they have tied up her limbs
Into Tappington mill-dam souse she goes,
With a whoop and a halloo! — "She swims! — She swims!"
They have dragged her to land,
And every one's hand,
Is grasping a fagot, a billet, or brand,
When a queer-looking horseman, drest all in black,

Snatches up that old harridan just like a sack
To the crupper behind him, puts spurs to his hack,
Makes a dash through the crowd, and is off in a crack!

No one can tell,

Though they guess pretty well,

Which way that grim rider and old woman go,

For all see he's a sort of infernal Ducrow;

And she scream'd so and cried,

We may fairly decide

That the old woman did not much relish her ride!

MORAL

This truest of stories confirms beyond doubt

That truest of adages — "Murder will out!"

In vain may the blood-spiller "double" and fly,

In vain even witchcraft and sorcery try:

Although for a time he may 'scape, by-and-by

He'll be sure to be caught by a Hugh and a Cry!



Many readers inform us that they are unable to find **MAGAZINE OF HORROR** on their local newsstands. We are doing everything we can in order to rectify this deplorable situation, but there are limits to what we can do. If your local dealer cannot obtain **MOH** for you, why not take advantage of our subscription offer on page 127 of this issue, which also tells about back issues and their contents? It is not required that you fill out this form in order to subscribe, and save money. Just be sure that your name and address are clearly printed, and that you let us know the date of the latest issue you have, so we can start your subscription with the following number.

The Garrison

by David Grinnell

BY A RATHER amusing coincidence, the Ace Book which contains Ray Cummings' *Wandl, The Invader* (D497) also carries a short novel by David Grinnell, a spoof on the pulp space opera entitled *Destiny's Orbit*. The author tells us that the idea for the present story is one of the original group that he jotted down in his teens, when he was thinking of becoming a writer. It was started several times, but never put in final shape or submitted until 1964. And, he adds, if we want to know whether the secret tunnel under the East River really exists, the answer is yes, it does.

YOU MAY RECALL reading of the discovery several years ago of an ancient temple of Mithra that was uncovered quite by accident in the business city of London during the excavations for a new building. It made a bit of a sensation for a while — not that it was any secret that there had been such a faith during the Roman days but that somehow this temple, basically untouched (if you disregard having been filled with

silt and many feet of dirt) had been there seventeen centuries without anyone suspecting its existence.

It brought home to some of us just how many wonders and secrets are buried from sight beneath the busy everyday feet of men and women. Surely all the towns and cities, the farmers' fields, and the scenic mountains of old Europe and Asia must conceal beneath their folds innumerable fragments of human

meanderings over the past thousands of years. The fact that there was once a major empire, that rivaled Egypt and Babylon for power and size, which had been very nearly totally forgotten until only the past dozen years is something that still staggers historians. I refer, of course, to the Hittites, mentioned a few times in the Bible and then forgotten.

Of course, for Americans like myself, there is an extra marvel in this evidence of antiquities untold. We live in such a new country, inhabited before us only by skin-tent nomadic savages; so that when a building is a mere hundred and fifty years old we put a plaque on it and visitors come to stand in the street and stare at it. I was driving along a road in New England when I saw one of those markers. It said something about somebody having erected a grist mill there in 1712. Big thing for us! But tell me, how many mills in Europe and Asia still standing and operating were already old when this American thing was first built?

That's what confounds me as an American. In Europe a house less than five hundred years old wouldn't get a second glance. Why, there must be slums all over the Old World whose dirty old hovels are a thousand years standing! But I'm getting away from what I started out to tell. About that temple in London

having gone unnoticed: I can tell you now that there's something like that in New York too.

I know it seems impossible, for after all there were no Romans here. That's true and I'm not going to claim otherwise. But still there was a structure uncovered in Manhattan Borough once that gave the archeologists a start. How is it that you've never heard of it? Well, that's my story.

I NEVER heard of it either and I've lived here all my life. I've been a magazine feature writer for many years now, and I've probed into a lot of odd places about this city for stories. But this is a part of one such story that I never did write up; I'm putting it down now, just for the record as it were.

Oh, the main story was written long ago and sold; and the magazine containing it will be found now only in second-hand stores, if anyone still wants it — which I doubt. It was about the subways of New York and mostly about the first subways and the old ones.

I covered the well-known subways to be sure. The story of the I.R.T. and the B.M.T. and of the tunnels they dug and discarded — there are a couple such way down near the Battery — and the story of the original plans and the difficulties that were encountered — underground streams and such-

like. The subway management co-operated with me. I walked the rails under the East River and I poked through their old blueprints and files, talked with engineers, and took pictures of some old tunnels.

Then one old-timer, a dispatcher he was, mentioned that there was a private subway in New York that practically nobody knew about. Not any of the big three. It ran — and still runs as a matter of fact — from the Manhattan office of the gas works under the river to Randalls Island where the gas company maintains a pumping station and storage tank. That was news to me and sounded like just the ticket to round off my article.

I called up the gas company and after beating my way through a dozen officials, finally found one who thought he could help me. I went up there to his office and told him what I had heard. He nodded, confirmed it. Yes, there really was a subway that had been built by the gas company about seventy years ago. They'd built it because there was no convenient ferry or bridge at that end of Manhattan to reach their works — Randalls Island being a small, uninhabited isle in the middle of the East River with Queensborough on the far side. Some company bigwig had money to burn and an idea. It wasn't such a hot idea.

In fact, the man said, the subway was never officially put into use. It was a regular boring, a full-size single-track tunnel running underground and under the river bottom. But after it had been built and the track laid, it just turned out to be unnecessary.

Was it still passable? Could I get to see it?

The official scratched his head. He didn't know for sure; the matter had never come up. He gave me a note to the superintendent of the works up at 135th Street and the river front and asked him to look into it with me.

I went up there and found the super. He knew about the private subway all right. Its Manhattan station, if you could call it that, was right here in this building — in the basement, he said. In fact, and what was more, the subway was clear and it was actually used. One man used it, once a day.

That man was the watchman of the Randalls Island installation. He lived in Manhattan, in the neighborhood, and each morning he would take his lunch box, go down to the basement, climb aboard a little hand-driven truck standing on the rails and go down that long dark tunnel under the river to Randalls Island. In the evening when his duties were done he'd get aboard it and run it back again. Just one man, imagine!

A whole subway line to serve one man!

NOTHING WOULD suffice but that I'd have to make that trip with him. Well, he was out at the island now. I'd have to wait until he returned. I did that, too. Went down to the basement, under the gas works, and found a little tiled room at one end of it. Sure enough, there were the end of tracks running out of a whopping big wide, round hole in the wall. I looked down into it — total darkness.

I sat down there on a small bench and looked down that hole around five o'clock, and after a while I heard a faint humming in the tracks. Then I saw a tiny light way off down that huge rat hole and by and by it came closer; and there was this little hand truck with an old guy standing on it, pumping the handles up and down vigorously, the light coming from a battery lamp set on the truck.

When the truck pulled up and stopped, I asked the old fellow whether he'd take me along tomorrow morning. He was quite pleased, talked a good deal about the trip. Most of the men who worked in the plant were scared stiff at the thought of it. It didn't bother him, for he'd been doing it for thirty years already.

But I'm not going to tell you about this — I've already writ-

ten about that weird trip down the pitch black hole with nobody but the old man and the crazy shadows as he bobbed up and down on that pump and the single light pushing into that absolute darkness. It was damp and silent and spooky as all hell — and yet, in a way, fun.

I'd taken a big flashlight of my own along and searched the old walls, the grimy tiling, the ancient piping — and, you know, it was in pretty good condition still. When we got to Randalls Island, I saw something interesting. There was a branch of the subway going off in a side direction, but no tracks.

Later on, I asked the old watchman about it. He frowned a bit, trying to recollect. "Oh yes," he said finally, "I never pay no attention to it. When they first built this thing, they was going to extend it across the island and connect it up with the Queens side. But that there section of side tunnel is as far as they got. They changed their minds fast after they'd got a little way along it."

"How's that? What made them stop?" I asked, sensing a story.

"They never rightly said. I've heard stories, of course. My father, who worked for the company in those days, once told me they'd run into some old diggings and decided not to bust them up."

"Old diggings? Dutch? Indi-

an? I never heard of any discoveries having been made here," I said.

"Well, I wouldn't know. I never paid no attention to that sort of museum stuff. I supposed the professors had found what they wanted and put it in books and all that. Maybe they didn't, though. Maybe they didn't at that. My pa did say they was sort of quiet about it all." The old fellow was enjoying himself. He had visions of seeing himself in print. I pressed my luck.

"Could you stop at that side tunnel going back and wait for me to walk along it to where they stopped excavating?"

The old fellow thought a while, then said he'd accommodate me. Sometimes I wish he hadn't been so helpful.

THAT EVENING, we got back on the handcart and pumped our way a little bit down the track until we found the dark branch-off. We stopped the truck and I got down with my flashlight. The watchman said he'd stay on the truck and wait for my return.

So I walked down that pitch-black tunnel by myself, my steps echoing hollowly in that pipe, big enough for a subway car to fit through. The tunnel turned sharply and the light of the handtruck was cut off. I flashed my light ahead, saw where the diggers had stopped.

There was an abrupt end of the tiling and piping. Beyond was a stretch of several yards of raw stone cut through with pick and drill. Beyond that there were some black breaks and loose masses of small rocks and debris. I walked as far as I could, flashed my beam, and saw that what had happened was that they'd broken into what was apparently an underground cavern or hole.

I started to climb over the piles of rock to reach the lip of the breakthrough and when I'd stretched out my body through the opening to look through, I noticed something. I wasn't lying any more on dirt and rock. I was lying — at least my chest and elbows — on smooth, chiseled rock, rock that had been squared off and joined to blocks of other rock by angles cut like a jigsaw puzzle. This rock was different than the kind in the passage outside. It looked as if it were something that had been constructed, like part of a wall.

And that's what it was, a thick wall, an artificially constructed wall, several feet thick, beyond which was the dark expanse of a buried structure. The excavators had broken into a room of this structure, a room still standing, whose ceiling had not crumpled.

I flashed my light around. The walls were smooth and undecorated. I couldn't place the style, but it was old. It had to

be old to have been under all that soil and so forgotten.

I climbed through, stood up in that damned lightless room and figured I'd made the find of the century. I'd be famous. I knew no Dutchman could have built that place. It was long before their time; they weren't building stone fortresses without cement. It reminded me of what I'd read of the Inca walls, but I was willing to bet this was older even than any Inca structure.

I crossed that empty room — a watch tower, I think now that it must have been — and at the end of it was a dark hole. It was probably meant for a ladder, but there was nothing there now. I knelt down beside that hole and looked down to see what was below.

It was vast down there; that much I knew. I realized that I was high up above the next landing. I felt it, I sensed it, that down below me was a drop of hundreds of feet. I flashed my light down and it barely shone on a smooth stone surface far, far below. I was beginning to get frightened then, and I don't scare easily. How big was this place? If it was a fortress, who built it and when and against what enemy?

For it *was* a fortress, of that I'm convinced. It was made to stand age and siege and fire and sword. It was made to stand tons of rock piled on it;

it was made impregnable to man and nature.

And then I wondered why the tunnel diggers had kept mum about it. I wondered that, while staring down that hole into the unknown depths of the fortress below me. And by and by, I suspected something. I suspected the answer. And when I was sure of it, I got up, kept my flashlight away from that hole and made my way out. I got back to the watchman and we went back to Manhattan; and I made my way home through the electric lights and the hurly-burly and the mobs in the streets and I was near crazy with wonder and the mystery of the universe. I looked up at the sky and I saw a million stars shining down and knew that to them and their mysteries all this clamor and bustle was tinsel and junk.

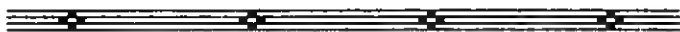
I knew why the excavators had shut up about the old fortress they'd dug into under the surface of the metropolis. The Temple of Mithra in London was ruined and abandoned. The catacombs of Rome have served their purpose and have been left to the curious. The great city of Angkor has been deserted by its citizens and left to the jungle.

But when I looked down that hole in the buried watch tower's floor, down into the keep of the fortress, into the darkness there, I saw a light appear.

I saw a sentinel go his rounds.
I saw a member of the garrison
still keeping up the vigil against
an enemy that would not be
one of the insignificant cloth-
covered biped scramblers of the
surface, but something that
would be coming some day
from the place that fortress was
built to oppose, something

worthy of that monstrous troop-
er's steel.

There are still some things
that it is necessary to conceal
for the sake of human pride.
One of them is that that fortress,
which is older than our entire
geological epoch, has never
been abandoned.



THE RECKONING

The increased number of readers who made use of our new, full-page preference sheet, is sufficient evidence that this was a popular step. The heading on the flip side, of course, is just for convenience; if you want to use that side for a continuation of general comment, fear not that we won't pay close attention. Several of you did, and we were delighted.

From the very first letter, which rated the Laurence Manning story in first place, there was never any doubt as to which story made the greatest impact on the majority of you who let us know. Nearly 75% reckoned this tale as either "outstanding" or first place; of the remaining 25% plus, one nominated it for 5th place, one for 4th, and one for 3rd, while the rest put it into the number two spot. This makes Mr. Manning's story the most popular we have run, by far, and the least controversial.

Here is how our November reckoning comes out: (1) *Caverns of Horror*, by Laurence Manning; (2) *The Mask*, by Robert W. Chambers; (3) *The Pacer*, by August Derleth; (4) tied between *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde*, by Robert Barbour Johnson and *The Door to Saturn*, by Clark Ashton Smith; (5) *The Moth*, by H. G. Wells.

Derleth received nearly as many "outstanding" votes as Manning, and both Chambers and Smith drew at least one such vote. Only Nathaniel Hawthorne failed to draw any "1" votes, though not a few put his story in second place. Most controversial tale was Smith's.

Passeur

by Robert W. Chambers

WHILE THE BEST-KNOWN strange tales by Robert W. Chambers were collected into the volume entitled *The King In Yellow*, there are others, including the present one, which appeared elsewhere. We have been unable to pinpoint this brief tale, other than ascertain that it was first copyrighted in 1897.

WHEN HE HAD finished his pipe he tapped the brier bowl against the chimney until the ashes powdered the charred log smouldering across the andirons. Then he sat back in his chair, absently touched the hot pipe-bowl with the tip of each finger until it grew cool enough to be dropped into his coat pocket.

Twice he raised his eyes to the little American clock ticking upon the mantel. He had half an hour to wait.

The three candles that lighted the room might be trimmed to advantage; this would give him something to do. A pair of scissors lay open upon the bureau, and he rose and picked them up. For a while he stood dreamily shutting and opening the scissors, his eyes roaming about the room. There was an easel in the corner, and a pile of dusty canvases behind it; behind the canvases there was a shadow — that gray, menacing shadow that never moved.

When he had trimmed each candle he wiped the smoky scissors on a paint rag and flung them on the bureau again. The clock pointed to ten; he had been occupied exactly three minutes.

The bureau was littered with neckties, pipes, combs and brushes, matches, reels and fly-books, collars, shirt studs, a new pair of Scotch shooting stockings, and a woman's workbasket.

He picked out all the neckties, folded them once, and hung them over a bit of twine that stretched across the looking glass; the shirt studs he shovelled into the top drawer along with brushes, combs, and stockings; the reel and fly-books he dusted with his handkerchief and placed methodically along the mantel shelf. Twice he stretched out his hand toward the woman's workbasket, but his hand fell to his side again, and he turned away into the room staring at the dying fire.

Outside the snow-sealed window a shutter broke loose and banged monotonously, until he flung open the panes and fastened it. The soft, wet snow, that had choked the window-panes all day, was frozen hard now, and he had to break the polished crust before he could find the rusty shutter hinge.

He leaned out for a moment, his numbed hands resting on the snow, the roar of a rising

snow-squall in his ears; and out across the desolate garden and stark hedgerow he saw the flat black river spreading through the gloom.

A candle sputtered and snapped behind him; a sheet of drawing paper fluttered across the floor, and he closed the panes and turned back into the room, both hands in his worn pockets.

The little American clock on the mantel ticked and ticked, but the hands lagged, for he had not been occupied five minutes in all. He went up to the mantel and watched the hands of the clock. A minute — longer than a year to him — crept by.

Around the room the furniture stood ranged — a chair or two of yellow pine, a table, the easel, and in one corner the broad curtained bed; and behind each lay shadows, menacing shadows that never moved.

A little pale flame started up from the smoking log on the andirons; the room sang with the sudden hiss of escaping wood gases. After a little the back of the log caught fire; jets of blue flared up here and there with mellow sounds like the lighting of gas-burners in a row, and in a moment a thin sheet of yellow flame wrapped the whole charred log.

THEN THE shadows moved; not the shadows behind the

furniture — they never moved — but other shadows, thin, gray, confusing, that came and spread their slim patterns all around him, and trembled.

He dared not step or tread upon them, they were too real; they meshed the floor around his feet, they ensnared his knees, they fell across his breast like ropes. Some night, in the silence of the moors, when wind and river were still, he feared these strands of shadow might tighten — creep higher around his throat and tighten. But even then he knew that those other shadows would never move, those gray shapes that knelt crouching in every corner.

When he looked up at the clock again ten minutes had struggled past. Time was disturbed in the room; the strands of shadow seemed entangled among the hands of the clock, dragging them back from their rotation. He wondered if the shadows would strangle Time, some still night when the wind and the flat river were silent.

There grew a sudden chill across the floor; the cracks of the boards let it in. He leaned down and drew his sabots toward him from their place near the andirons, and slipped them over his chaussons; and as he straightened up, his eyes mechanically sought the mantel above, where in the dusk another pair of sabots stood, little slender, delicate sabots, carved from red

beech. A year's dust grayed their surface; a year's rust dulled the silver band across the instep. He said this to himself aloud, knowing that it was within a few minutes of the year.

His own sabots came from Mort-Dieu; they were shaved square and banded with steel. But in days past he had thought that no sabot in Mort-Dieu was delicate enough to touch the instep of the Mort-Dieu passeur. So he sent to the shore light-house, and they sent to Lorient, where the women are coquetish and show their hair under the coiffe, and wear dainty sabots; and in this town, where vanity corrupts and there is much lace on coiffe and colar-ette, a pair of delicate sabots was found, banded with silver and chiselled in red beech. The sabots stood on the mantel above the fire now, dusty and tarnished.

There was a sound from the window, the soft murmur of snow blotting glass panes. The wind, too, muttered under the eaves. Presently it would begin to whisper to him from the chimney — he knew it — and he held his hands over his ears and stared at the clock.

In the hamlet of Mort-Dieu the panes sing all day of the sea secrets, but in the night the ghosts of little gray birds fill the branches, singing of the sunshine of past years. He heard

the song as he sat, and he crushed his hands over his ears; but the gray birds joined with the wind in the chimney, and he heard all that he dared not hear, and he thought all that he dared not hope or think, and the swift tears scalded his eyes.

In Mort-Dieu the nights are longer than anywhere on earth; he knew it — why should he not know? This had been so for a year; it was different before. There were so many things different before; days and nights vanished like minutes then; the pins told no secrets of the sea, and the gray birds had not yet come to Mort-Dieu. Also, there was Jeanne, passeur at the Carmes.

WHEN HE FIRST saw her she was poling the square, flat-bottomed ferryskiff from the Carmes to Mort-Dieu, a red skirt fluttering just below her knees. The next time he saw her he had to call to her across the placid river, "Ohel Ohel passeur!" She came, poling that flat skiff, her eyes fixed pensively on him, the scarlet skirt and kerchief idly flapping in the April wind. Then day followed day when the far call "Passeur!" grew clearer and more joyous, and the faint answering cry, "I come!" rippled across the water like music tinged with laughter. Then spring came, and with spring came love — love, carried free

across the ferry from the Carmes to Mort-Dieu.

The flame above the charred log whistled, flickered, and went out in a jet of wood vapor, only to play like lightning above the gas and relight again. The clock ticked more loudly, and the song from the pines filled the room. But in his straining eyes a summer landscape was reflected, where white clouds sailed and white foam curled under the square bow of a little skiff. And he pressed his numbed hands tighter to his ears to drown the cry, "Passeur! Passeur!"

And now for a moment the clock ceased ticking. It was time to go — who but he should know it, he who went out into the night from the first — from that first strange winter evening when a strange voice answered him across the river, the voice of the new passeur. He had never heard *her* voice again.

So he passed down the windy wooden stairs, lantern hanging lighted in his hand, and stepped out into the storm. Through sheets of drifting snow, over heaps of frozen seaweed and icy drift he moved, shifting his lantern right and left, until its glimmer on the water warned him. Then he called out into the night, "Passeur!" The frozen spray splattered his face and crusted the lantern; he heard the distant boom of breakers beyond the bar, and the noise

of mighty winds among the seaward cliffs.

"Passeur!"

Across the broad flat river, black as a sea of pitch, a tiny light sparkled a moment. Again he cried, "Passeur!"

"I come!"

He turned ghastly white, for it was her voice — or was he crazy? — and he sprang waist deep into the icy current and cried out again, but his voice ended in a sob.

Slowly through the snow the flat skiff took shape, creeping nearer and nearer. But she was not at the pole — he saw that; there was a tall, thin man, shrouded to the eyes in oilskin; and he leaped into the boat and bade the ferryman hasten.

Halfway across he rose in the

skiff, and called, "Jeannel!" But the roar of the storm and the thrashing of the icy waves drowned his voice. Yet he heard her again, and she called to him by name.

When at last the boat grated upon the invisible shore, he lifted his lantern, trembling, stumbling among the rocks, and calling to her, as though his voice could silence the voice that had spoken a year ago that night. And it could not. He sank shivering upon his knees, and looked out into the darkness, where an ocean rolled across a world. Then his stiff lips moved, and he repeated her name, but the hand of the ferryman fell gently upon his head.

And when he raised his eyes he saw that the ferryman was death.



Orpheus's Brother

by John Brunner

WE MUST CONFESS with sorrow that, despite the opportunity provided by a meeting with the author over subgum fried rice, we neglected to obtain from him the title, date, etc., of his first-published story, and thus can tell you only that it appeared later than 1950. Neither author is demeaned when we say that Brunner is a British Robert Silverberg, for both are young, handsome, widely-read, well-traveled, amazingly prolific and competent even in their "formula" tales, and delightful personalities. Brunner's published novels are well in excess of 25, and he estimated that they will soon equal his age, if they have not already passed that mark. We have read only a fraction of them, but most heartily recommend *Times Without Number* (Ace Book F161), which portrays the civilization which might have resulted had the Spanish Armada conquered England. The present tale is one of the few short stories he has written since he turned to book-length novels.

"A third Linus likewise lies buried at Argos: he was the poet whom some describe as a son of Oeagrus and the Muse Caliope — thus making him Orpheus's brother."

— Robert Graves: *The Greek Myths*

ALL THE reasons why I was not glad to find him waiting in the dark in my apartment would

make a long list. He had a gun; he was eighteen years old; he was very frightened; he hated me

And he looked very like his brother.

His face was pale as a corpse's — waxy, the skin stiffened with fear, the lips drawn back from

sharp young teeth, the eyes wide and brilliant. He was wearing a black shirt and black jeans — Rock's trademark. Hero-worship, perhaps.

The idea struck me as amusing, relieved the iron-bar solidness of my first tense alarm at finding him here, and started me casting about for ways to make him put the gun down without using it. I stood with my left hand on the light-switch and my right extended to close the door, exactly as I had been when I realized he was here. I moved only my eyes, scanning the room. It was not quite as I had left it. Certain objects had been moved — though nothing was missing; this was an honest burglar — and all the doors leading to other rooms had been opened, except one. He would certainly have tried that one, and found it proof against anything short of dynamite.

"Come inside," he said in a thin voice. "Shut the door."

Moving carefully, so as not to alarm him, I did so, and then walked towards the Louis Quatorze chair which was the twin of the one in which he had chosen to sit waiting for me to return. The muzzle of the gun followed me, jerkily.

"What are you doing here?" I said. "What do you want?"

"You know who I am," he said. "Don't pretend you're stupid — it won't work"

"Of course I know you!" I

snapped. "You're Laurie Suggs — Rock's brother. You're damned lucky I recognized you, or I'd have slammed that door and been hollering for the police before you'd got used to the light being on. Or I could have jumped you. I may be old enough to be your grandfather, but the dazzle would have slowed you down. Didn't it strike you that it was silly to wait in the dark?"

He swallowed, making his Adam's apple bob on his boy-stringy neck. It ran in the family, apparently — I'd seen pictures of his and Rock's father, with the same prominence on the throat.

"You bastard," he said after a while "You know why I came here."

I considered a possible retort along the lines: "If I know your family, it's to get money out of me." But it would be safer not to make him angry as well as scared.

"No, I don't," I said finally. "And I don't know what you think you want that gun for. Put it down."

He softened the wax-pallor of his face enough to form a sketchy smile, and shook his head very slightly.

"Put it down!" I repeated more loudly. "It isn't a toy — guns are for killing, and they call that murder."

"They didn't call it murder when you killed my brother, Mr. Wise," he said.

THE AIR IN the room went suddenly cold, and my mind with it. I had thought at first — or assumed, rather — that he had indeed come after money; I'd paid a great deal to Rock's relations, without much regret. I had taken for granted that his tour of the apartment, picking up and putting down the jade, the silver, the porcelain, was to help him estimate how much he could expect me to pay. The gun, on that basis, would be purely for reassurance, something to fondle *netsuke*-wise in the dark hour of waiting before my eventual return.

Not now.

I looked at the gun as though seeing it for the first time, and its round smug mouth seemed to form a soundless word.

Death.

If there was any salvation for me now, it lay in that twist of the mind which makes the act of killing most meaningful when one knows the man he kills: not a stranger in the sights of a rifle, a sleeved limb shattered from its body by a bomb, but a person, an individual, upon whom is performed the most terrific act of love.

But there might be no salvation even there. Nonetheless, I felt a tingling need that the moment be later, because although the patient's knowledge of the agent adds nothing to the act, I had always feared that I might be ended by an anonymous no-

body: a driver on a freeway or a petty hoodlum. And I did not *know* Laurie Suggs, nor he me.

So he had come here to kill me. He would be sustained, therefore, by a sense of loyalty and the inspiring concept of vengeance. Take those from him, show him the emptiness of the deed in the eyes of others, the absence of glory — and then, perhaps . . .

I gave a short laugh. "You'd better be careful making accusations like that, Laurie," I said. "That's nearly as dangerous as playing with guns." I had been wrong to say his gun wasn't a toy, I saw now. It would help if I could attack the line of his weakness by making his behavior childish. So: *playing*.

He shook his head again. "You killed Jack, Mr. Wise," he said in the same thin voice. "That was what you had in mind all along. I got pictures showing you did it."

"Then you're the only person who has," I said. "And you weren't even there. How'd you get the pictures — draw them yourself?"

Kid stuff, drawing. I thought so. Finger-painting in the school-room. He shifted on his chair and for a moment pressed his lips together as though to stifle an angry answer. The fact that he didn't want to get angry was on my side, too.

"Nuts," he said. He put his left hand awkwardly behind him

to reach at the right hip pocket of the black jeans. "I mean real pictures that everyone saw. These!"

He tugged out a soiled and folded wad of clippings from newspapers, not quite old enough to be yellow but on the turn. Lefthanded, he tossed the wad at me, and it fell on my lap.

"Open 'em up," he said. "Look at 'em. You're right there with the rest clawing at Jack, like a hound going on two legs. You smile, I'll kill you slow, shoot you in the belly first and let you bleed awhile. Hear me?"

I TOOK the clippings and separated them, trying not to tear them where they had rubbed on the folds. They were all the ones I had expected. The big shouting headlines came at me like train-whistles.

FANS MOB SINGER, KILLED IN FRENZY!

ROCK CARELESS DEAD IN AFTER-SHOW RIOT!

POP SINGER DIES AS FANS MOB HIM!

God, how they loved it! Coast-to-coast and around the world they loved it, *drooled* it out in their huge ill-detailed black-and-white pictures. Oh yes, here I was — where else should I be, manager of this singer so loved by his fans they didn't want anything less than *him*?

I said very calmly and reasonably, "Laurie, you're talking crazy nonsense, you know that."

"You're right there with the rest," he said. "Tearing at him. Pulling at him. Like dogs breaking up a rabbit."

"Now you shut your dirty mouth!" I flared. "What the hell did you expect me to do — stand back and let those lunatics do as they wanted? Damn you, I was beaten nearly to death myself trying to get Rock out of the middle of it! You take another good look at these pictures — I'm not trying to rip your brother to pieces, I'm trying to help him get out of the crowd! What do you think I am — a cannibal or something?"

I balled the clippings up and threw them back at him.

"I ought to make you eat those words," I said. "Write 'em out and make you eat 'em, one by one. But I gather you're grieving for Rock as badly as I did."

"You're smooth, Mr. Wise," he said. He wasn't quite so sure of himself. "But you didn't care for Jack. He wasn't anything to you."

"Nothing to me? Laurie, you watch what you're saying or I'll come after you, gun or no gun, and whale a little sense into your backside. You know I got closer to Rock than . . ."

"His name wasn't Rock. I'm not talking about anyone called Rock. You made up Rock

Careless and hung the name on a guy who came handy. A guy called Jack Suggs, who was *my brother*. I didn't say that Rock wasn't anything to you — he was just about everything, I guess. Meal ticket, rent account, carfare — a walking bank, especially when he was out of the way and the publicity of his death boosted those record sales. And not just cash, you smooth bastard. I looked around this apartment when I came in. I saw that room behind you."

"It was his."

"You mean he was yours." He spat accurately into the middle of a handwoven Turkey rug beside his chair. "I ought to shoot you just for that, making my brother into a — hell, I never learned what word was bad enough to fit."

He looked sick. I felt a stir of relief. Provided that silly emotional reaction didn't drive him to some deed of symbolic desperation, it too, was working on my side.

I said, "Go ahead, then."

He blinked at me, suddenly uncertain.

"Go ahead," I repeated. "Want to shoot your brother, too? This brother you're so crazy about — you're all set to avenge him nobly, thinking this'll set you up in the eyes of the world alongside him? *Nuts.*"

"What do you mean?" His eyes narrowed; he looked alarmed. I was getting closer. Now I had it.

"That's what you want, isn't it? You want to shoot the brother who made his way in the world — the brother who liked you and the rest of his family so much he wouldn't admit to having any kin — the brother who didn't see why the hell he should give any of what he'd earned for himself to people who'd never given him anything even though they were his relatives. But you can't shoot him. He's dead. He's immortal! So you decided you'd shoot his best friend instead."

His mouth was working. I leaned forward on my chair and flung the last words at him like knives. "Jack Suggs didn't die by being mobbed and broken in a crowd of fans. Jack Suggs killed himself because he hated being Jack Suggs. He wanted to be Rock Careless — he *liked* being Rock Careless — and I was all the family Rock Careless ever had."

HE CLOSED his eyes and then, remembering he had to watch me and keep the gun levelled at me, snapped them open again. He said, "Nuts. I went over this place before you got back. You didn't care about Rock either, 'cept as a bank-book. You talk very slick, but it doesn't hang together."

He laughed. It was an unpleasant noise, fit to set the teeth on edge.

"He wasn't any part of your world, Mr. Wise. This . . ." He waved his left hand around the apartment. "This doesn't belong with Jack, or Rock Careless either. You're a rich egghead who didn't give a hoot about your human playpretty. He sang good, played guitar good — same as hundreds of others. You figured you could live off his back. And you did. And when you'd made enough, you saw how you could make some more and be rid of Jack as well. You pulled him to pieces. Did he scream? They said in the paper you couldn't hear for the crowd of fans."

"Jack Suggs left home the earliest moment he could," I said. I was having trouble keeping my voice scornful. "He didn't have a cent, but he wanted the hell out and nothing else mattered. He and I stayed together for going on three years. This time he had a million bucks in the bank in his own name. *You* know that — since he didn't make a will, it was carved up among his kin-folk, and I guess there's a piece of it coming to you if you don't get yourself to the electric chair through playing with a gun once too often. Rock Careless had a cool million; he could have walked out any day. He stuck with me. You figure it. I

say I was his best friend and he'd have said the same."

"Mister," the boy said, his voice beginning to give at the edges like mine, "I don't agree. You're a smooth liar, but I went over this place like I told you. I don't find anything to say he was a friend of yours. I don't find his picture any place. I don't find his discs in your rack along with the longhair music. I say you didn't give a blind damn for him and you killed him because you . . ."

"Jesus!" I said. "Listen, kid. They sent me back from the hospital after I got through mending the two ribs the crowd broke, and I went through this place and I took down the pictures and I smashed the discs because I didn't want to be reminded every time I turned around that he was *dead!*"

THIS ONE worked.

The waxy face melted. The mask distorted. The dangerous young man with a gun seemed to fade from the room, leaving only a puzzled, trembling boy with a gun. I was in command.

"You didn't get all broken up over being reminded when I made you look at those pictures," he said after a pause.

"No," I agreed. "No, I'm finished with getting broken up about it, and I'll tell you why." I reached to my pocket, and the gun jerked. "I'm not trying to pull a gun on you!" I said sharp-

ly. "I was going to offer you a cigarette, okay?"

I took out the pack and half-rose from the chair, as naturally as I could, to offer it to him. He hesitated, then took the cigarette; I gave him a light with a table lighter patterned after the sort of lamp Aladdin is generally shown using.

He let out the first of the smoke, closing his eyes. He said, "Damn you, Mr. Wise . . . I *know* what you say about Jack hating his family is so, and I guess it did start before you ever met him, but do I have to like you when I know what you did to him?"

"You're still saying I tore him to bits?" I suggested, and tensed for the answer.

After a moment he gave a negative sort of shrug, and I was so relieved I nearly showed it. Fortunately, even if I had, it wouldn't have mattered; his eyes had strayed to one of the fine pieces of ancient votive ware displayed on the tables against the wall — a statue of Bacchus portrayed in one of his most characteristic postures, seated on a pillar-like base of unmistakable symbolism.

One of these days, I thought, someone was going to sit in this apartment and look at my Bacchus and talk about the death of Rock Careless, and that someone would be well enough educated to put two and two together. Not Laurie Suggs,

though. Not an ignorant country-born youth.

He said eventually, "That thing makes me want to puke."

"Rock used to find it amusing," I said. "I was going to tell you why I got over mourning after Rock. I'd like you to hear my reasons — I think it might make you feel a bit more kindly disposed towards me."

He curled his lip and went on staring at the statuette.

"You know," I said reflectively, "what happened to Rock wasn't just — a singer being mobbed by his fans, being accidentally injured in the crush. It was more than that. It was his apotheosis, in the literal sense."

The burning eyes turned to me again. He said, "Stuff your three-dollar words."

"Apotheosis means making into a god. I said that you weren't able to kill Rock now, because he's immortal. I mean that literally, and this is something which hasn't happened for thousands of years, so far as I know. It's the most tremendous thing that could have happened."

"You go on like this," he said, "and I'll start thinking you helped tear him to bits all over again."

"Think about what I'm saying instead."

A frown furrowed the forehead to which a little color was returning now. "You mean —

his being killed was sort of a bigger thing than if he'd gone on living? Like Jimmy Dean? Like Buddy Holly?"

THIS Laurie Suggs was a very intelligent youth, I realized. I was profoundly glad he was also ignorant. I said, "Not exactly, though I must admit it was thinking about those two which first showed me the truth. No, the guy I had in mind was someone you probably haven't heard of: Orpheus."

"Who was he?"

"He was a singer and musician who was said to be so — so great that he could charm animals, trees, even mountains with his music. This is probably exaggerated because he lived at least three thousand years ago, if he actually did live. I think he did, myself. And the same thing happened to him as happened to Rock. He played to a gang of women called Bacchantes, who were so wild about him they tore him to pieces. And because of this he became a god; they founded a religion in his honor called the Orphic Mysteries — a sort of church. I guess you aren't quite following me."

He shook his head quickly, his mouth a little open. He had relaxed enough to rest his heavy gun on his knee. I started to get on my feet. I knew him now — not well, but well enough.

"Move slow!" he said, tens-

ing. "What you going to do? I don't like all this wild talk about Jack turning into a god!"

"Oh, it's the truth," I said, and chuckled inwardly. "Want me to prove it to you? I'd have thought you'd want to know what a terrific thing really happened when your brother died."

I gestured at the door he hadn't been able to open when he toured the apartment. "Let me get the strong-room open, and I'll show you. I'll prove it to you. You've got reason to be proud of your brother, you know."

As casually as I could I walked to the locked door and put my fingers on the combination lock. The sound of the boy's irregular breathing and the click of tumblers was all that could be heard in the room for long moments. Then I swung the door back and stood aside.

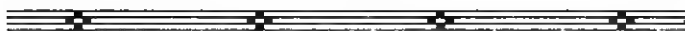
He didn't even have time to scream. He loosed one shot, which went wild, and then the panthers had borne him backward to the floor and were taking their sacrifice. While they were at it I mused on the curious relationship between the Bacchus-cult, that of Orpheus, and these graceful beasts.

The boy was scrawny, of course, and was not enough to satisfy the panthers; when they had done with him they would have rent me also, but by the power of the god I subdued

them and returned them to their captivity. Then I picked up the smouldering cigarette which had fallen in the middle of the Turkey rug and stubbed it out, but not before it had burned a hole.

I noticed that by chance —

or perhaps not by chance — the spurt from the boy's jugular released by a slash of panther claws had drenched my Bacchus, making it run redder than wine. I cleared up all the other traces, but the blood on the statuette, I felt, was better left to dry where it was.



Cassilda's Song

*Along the shore the cloud waves break,
The twin suns sink behind the lake,
The shadows lengthen*

In Carcosa.

*Strange is the night where black stars rise
And strange moons circle through the skies,
But stranger still is*

Lost Carcosa.

*Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatters of the King,
Must die unheard in*

Dim Carcosa.

*Song of my soul, my voice is dead,
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed
Shall dry and die in*

Lost Carcosa.

*from "The King in Yellow", act 1., scene 2.
(requested by Gene Orsogna)*

The Lady Of The Velvet Collar

by Washington Irving

OF WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859), Edgar Allan Poe wrote, "Irving is much overrated, and a nice distinction might be drawn between his just and his surreptitious and adventitious reputation — between what is due to the pioneer solely, and what to the writer." This is hardly justice to the first American author who, as Marcus Cunliffe puts it, in *The Literature of the United States*, "... emerging from a family in trade and from the callow literary circles of New York, managed to entertain the entire civilized world: an author who could please both his own countrymen and the English — both exacting in their different ways . . ." Perhaps both views are somewhat irrelevant to most of us today, as Irving is very little read, and we ourselves have yet to get to him. In any event, nothing can abrogate the fact that he was the first American author to make an impression on Britain and Europe, which had heretofore mocked at the thought that anything worth an intelligent man's reading could come out of barbarous America. The present story is from *Tales of a Traveler*, which first appeared in 1824, nearly two decades after Irving's reputation as a humorist had been established with *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by "Diedrich Knickerbocker."

ON A STORMY night, in the tempestuous times of the French Revolution, a young

German was returning to his lodgings, at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The light-

ning gleamed, and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty narrow streets — but I should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Gottingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences, until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and insure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendors and gayeties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived in Paris at the breaking out of the Revolu-

tion. The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day, but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature, disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the Pays Latin, the quarter of students. There, in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne, he pursued his favorite speculations. Sometimes he spent hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel-house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, though solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a

dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong was the impression made, that he dreamed of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his slumbers by night; in fine, he became passionately enamored of his shadow of a dream. This lasted so long that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late one stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the Marais, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the Place de la Greve, the square where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient Hotel de Ville, and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the Reign of Terror (when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in

the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array, amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

WOLFGANG'S heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form, cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap; and her long disheveled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of woe. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heartbroken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding,

by the bright glare of the lighting, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and disconsolate, but ravishingly beautiful.

Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a gesture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes — in the gravel"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

"If a stranger dare make an offer," said he, "without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter; myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you."

There was an honest earnestness in the young man's manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favor; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed, there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless

stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student.

He supported her faltering steps across the Pont Neuf, and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for awhile, to gather fresh strength for the next day's eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the Pays Latin, and by the dusky walls of the Sorbonne, to the great dingy hotel which he inhabited. The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang with a female companion.

ON ENTERING his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber — an old-fashioned salon — heavily carved, and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was of those hotels in the quarter of the Luxembourg Palace which had once belonged to nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it. Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore, was a broad black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinated by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast

like himself, and enthusiasts soon understand each other.

In the infatuation of the moment, Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledged to have felt an impulse toward him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away; everything was under the sway of the "Goddess of Reason." Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superfluous bonds for honorable minds. Social compacts were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of a theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

"Why should we separate?" said he. "Our hearts are united; in the eye of reason and honor we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high souls together?"

The stranger listened with emotion; she had evidently received illumination at the same school.

"You have no home nor family," continued he; "let me be everything to you, or rather let us be everything to one another. If form is necessary, form shall be observed — there

is my hand. I pledge myself to you forever."

"Forever!" said the stranger, solemnly.

"Forever!" repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her. "Then I am yours," murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

THE NEXT morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments, suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced to awaken her from her uneasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold — there was no pulsation — her face was pallid and ghastly — in a word, she was a corpse.

Horried and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of

confusion ensued. The police were summoned.

As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

"Great heaven!" cried he; "how did this woman come here?"

"Do you know anything about her?" said Wolfgang eagerly.

"Do I?" exclaimed the police officer; "she was guillotined yesterday."

He stepped forward, undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. "The fiend! The fiend has gained possession of me!" shrieked he; "I am lost forever."

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had reanimated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a madhouse.



Jack

by Reynold Junker

Very little fantastic, strange, or horror fiction is designed to be instructive, these days — and for the most part we can be grateful, for pedagogy in fiction usually banishes art rather quickly. However, any reader who may like to see a moral in a story ought to be able to find one here.

HARRY ALLYSON watched the dust rise and settle behind the bobbing tail lights of the train that was pulling faster and faster down the tracks away from him. *Hell*, he thought disgustedly, *only women and preachers keep promises that cost them time and money*. He could taste the sweat and dust

of the trip mingling with the sweet smell of the rain. It hadn't started yet, but the clouds were there, black and heavy. They hung over the abandoned station like something out of an old, silent vampire movie. He smiled at the thought of little German men with neatly pointed black beards creeping across the

screen behind trees and through windows, busy either being vampires or chasing them down. The Germans he had met hadn't been at all like that.

Harry glanced down at his watch. Soon the clouds would be lost against the night, and then there would only be the rain. Harry liked the rain, but only when he could sit with a Martini and watch it falling in big drops against a window. He liked to watch the wet, silent people hurrying along after taxis or into subways or warm little bars. But he was a long way from New York now, and it had been a long war, a very long war. He wondered whether or not the dark, long-legged models still hurried along through the rain clutching their coats about their tight, warm bodies and whether they still wore those heels that made that funny, clacking noise against the wet pavement. Women who shook the rain out of their hair. Women who laughed loud and long from some place deep in their throats. Women who drank only scotch and knew that life was nothing more than simply being alive. He smiled to himself again. Of course it was still like that. It hadn't been that long. He picked up the leather two-suit and the worn army issue duffle bag that the Negro porter had placed on the platform beside him and walked to the deserted wooden building.

The station was a single, large room blotched and faded with rain and dampness. It was lined along three sides with warped, colorless benches. A ticket agent's cage stood locked and rusting under a clock whose hands had stopped at ten minutes past two. The floor was covered with a reddish gray dust and there were places where it looked as though something heavy might have been dragged across it. An odor like stale urine hung over the room. Harry walked slowly past the cage and out into the narrow street behind the building. There wasn't anybody or anything in sight. It hadn't started to rain yet. Harry moved into the doorway. He dropped the bags and lit a cigarette.

HE WONDERED how all of this had been when Jack was alive, when his parents had taken him down to the train to see him off to war. He thought about the clock and whether it had stopped before or since then. Ten minutes past two. You meet a lot of people in a war, he thought, but damned few of them die in your arms. Then it struck him that he had not the slightest idea of what he would say to these people, people he had never met or seen. Sure Jack had told him about them, shown him pictures. He remembered that they were very much like Jack, strong, young-looking

country people. His father wore suspenders and his mother . . . his mother? But that didn't do any good. You just don't walk up to the first healthy looking man you see wearing suspenders and say "How do you do? My name is Harry Allyson. Your son, Jack, was my friend. We were in the same outfit. He died in my arms. Your son was a hero, but not a fast enough hero, because there was this German who was faster than he was . . . and they are not little men with pointed black beards who leer at you and call you Mein Herr. You must have gotten my letter . . . That's right. I promised him that I'd come to see you and tell you about his death and bring along some things that he wanted you to have. This duffle bag, inside . . . Yes, that's right . . . that's right. His legs. That's right. He asked me to . . . Yes, he did. He cried. It was all very ugly and painful . . . Both legs. Yes, that's right."

"We'd better get started before the rain Mister."

STARTLED, Harry spun toward the voice. The man who had spoken must have come up from behind him. He hadn't made a sound. For what seemed to him like minutes, Harry was unable to speak. He just stood staring at the man, caught up in his surprise. Except for his face, there was nothing about him that was in any way out of the

ordinary. He was extremely thin, but heavy folds of thick flesh hung loosely about his face and neck, as though he had been much heavier at one time. His eyes looked terribly tired. But it wasn't that that had startled Harry. It was the fact that he was expecting Jack's father, that and the way the man had moved up on him.

"How do you do? I . . ." Harry began, but the man had turned and was already moving away toward an old pick-up that was standing several feet from the end of the platform. Harry was sure that he hadn't seen it before, and it couldn't have driven up while he was standing there or he'd have heard it. It must have been the angle at which it was parked. Harry picked up his bags and followed the man to the truck. *Not exactly the friendliest welcome*, he thought; *must be some character who works for the family.*

Harry tossed the luggage into the back of the truck and drew a heavy tarp that was lying there over it. He climbed up into the cab beside the driver. The pick-up started noisily and lurched out along the road past the station.

"How far is it out to the house?"

"Not far." This wasn't exactly the answer that Harry had expected. He turned and faced the driver.

"Look. I'm Harry Allyson. I

was a friend of Jack's. I was with him during the war . . ."

"I know. I know all about that, Mister."

"You do work for the Boyers, don't you? They did send you?"

The man faced Harry. He looked as though he hadn't slept for a week, "I am Jonathan Boyer, Mister."

The voice was flat. The muscles moved and the words came out. A plain, simple statement of fact. "I am Jonathan Boyer, Mister." Harry felt something flutter between his heart and stomach. *People change*, he thought, *but not like this*. It hadn't been that long. A couple of years, three, four maybe? His eyes shifted unconsciously to the man's suspenders. He wished he had never met Jack Boyer.

"I'm sorry . . ."

Mr. Boyer spat out of the open window. "We never got that telegram, the one you talked about in your letter. Never knew anything about it, his getting killed like that."

"They sent it out. They always do."

"We warned him, me and his mother. He never should of gone . . ."

These people had lost a son. Maybe they had a right to feel that way. Harry remembered the Purple Heart in the duffle bag. Fat lot, but the hell . . . "He died a hero. You can be proud of him, you and his mother."

Mr. Boyer never moved his eyes from the road. His whole body came alive with anger. His creased face twitched into grotesqueness. "You tell his mother just how proud she can be. Now that you've told me what a hero he was. You tell his mother that, Mister."

Harry felt sick with foolishness. He shouldn't have said it. He shouldn't have said anything. It was stupid. In a war everybody's a hero. You don't have to killed to be one.

"I'm sorry, Mister."

Harry turned. "What?"

"I said I was sorry. It's not your fault . . . about his dying. If the Lord had wanted it different, He'd of made it different. But it hurt his mother, hurt her bad and I don't know what to do, Mister. I just don't know."

Harry wanted to say something about if there was anything he could do, but he had already made a fool of himself and besides all he really wanted to do was be out of there and in New York. He settled back against the seat and wished himself in a bar somewhere in Manhattan.

Mr. Boyer pressed down against the accelerator. It had started to rain.

THEY HAD turned off the main highway and driven several miles along a dirt road when Harry first noted that he had not seen a house since they had left

the highway. It was raining heavily now and he was becoming uneasy about being so far from the station. He was getting tired and assured himself that all he would do was see Mrs. Boyer, drop off Jack's gear and then have her husband take him back to the station or somewhere where he could get a bus to New York.

"Just up this road a ways, now," Mr. Boyer said after the silence.

"How far are we from town?"

"Not too far. Rain makes the driving troublesome. Makes it seem longer. Especially this road. But it makes it private enough so that people can do as they please without anybody else ever butting in."

The house seemed to Harry to be growing up out of the thickness of trees and high grass that surrounded it. Not that it in any way resembled a living thing. It stood in the rain that beat down against it like something dead and forgotten that continues to grow and decay after death, a gray, wooden, two-story building. Harry's thoughts drifted back to the deserted station. Had everything in this area run down and rotted like this? It was almost as though everything he had seen was being strangled by what grew up around it. The uneasiness he had felt earlier returned along with the thought of getting back to town. But he had never even seen a town, nor

for that matter a house, not since they had left the highway.

Mr. Boyer rolled the truck to a stop in the mud in front of the house. Seemingly not conscious of the rain, he climbed out of the cab, took the two bags from the rear of the truck and started up the steps into the house. Harry followed close behind him. The front of the house was dark and the windows were black and empty except for one at the corner of the second story that was framed with white curtains. A gust of wind caught them up and Harry was startled to see that behind the curtains the window was crossed vertically with what appeared to be iron bars. He wondered how badly the death of her son had affected Mrs. Boyer.

EXCEPT FOR the obvious effects of age and weather, the inside of the house was fairly pleasant. From what Harry could see of the front room, it was furnished with old, well-cared-for pieces of furniture. But the walls were faded and blistered, and everything he touched was covered with an invisible film of dust and dampness. Mr. Boyer disappeared into one of the other rooms with Harry's bags and left him alone in the parlor. He drifted about the room aimlessly, waiting for Mrs. Boyer to make an appearance. There was a photograph of Jack at one end of the white mantle. He was in

uniform, smiling broadly and wearing his cap at a ridiculous angle. Harry remembered that he had even worn his helmet that way. In a second photograph at the other end, he was standing between his parents. Harry was struck at once by the impression that neither of his parents looked much older than Jack himself. His father was the same man Harry had seen in the other pictures and his mother was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. He imagined for a moment what she might look like shaking the rain out of her hair.

"His name was Jonathan. Named him after me." Mr. Boyer had returned and was standing behind him. All at once Harry was aware of the unpleasant odor in the room. It was as though it had been let in from one of the other rooms when Mr. Boyer had opened the door. It was an odor that Harry knew but couldn't quite place. He turned to Mr. Boyer.

"Jack . . . Jack's what you called him, eh? Jack. He changed, Jonathan did. Even his name. That would have hurt his mother too, but she never saw the letter from him . . ."

"May I see Mrs. Boyer now?"

"I hid it from her. Didn't want her to see it. He told us that he wasn't coming home no more. Said that he was going to live in the city, New York. Said that only a jail would keep him in

this 'hick town'. The war had taught him a lot of things, most important, 'how to live'. That's what he said, 'how to live' . . . almost as though being here with me and his mother was like being dead or something. But she never saw it. I wondered for a while what to do. Funny . . . he'd of stayed, once he got here."

HARRY SHIFTED against the mantle. He was anxious to be on his way. This whole thing was getting just a little too morbid for him now.

"Then your letter came and she got to it first. It hurt her, Mister. It hurt her bad. She said there wasn't no reason for living. That's the way women are, Mister. Got to have someone to tend and look after."

"I'm sorry about the letter. If I'd known that you hadn't gotten the telegram . . ."

Mr. Boyer shrugged. "Wouldn't of made no difference, one way or the other . . . We tried again. To have another baby, I mean. The doctor had warned us against it and I guess he was right. The baby was born dead. That's what really almost killed her. I sometimes think it might of been better that way."

Mr. Boyer moved to the window and stood staring at the rain being swept across the glass. "You going home?"

Harry felt awkward. The question was one he really had-

n't expected, not that it was an unusual one. It was just that he didn't really know how Mr. Boyer would take it. "No, no . . . I live alone in New York. My parents both died when I was quite young."

Mr. Boyer didn't move from the window. "That's too bad. Fellow needs someone to take care of him."

"When can I see Mrs. Boyer? I've really got to be going."

"In the morning . . ."

"Look, I'd like to stay, but I . . ."

Mr. Boyer shook his head slowly. "Mrs. Boyer's resting." He turned back to the window. "Anyway, we'd never be able to make it back in this storm. I'll show you your room."

IT WASN'T long after Harry had fallen asleep that he was wakened by the sound of someone digging in the yard not far from his window. It was still raining. He picked up the watch he had laid on the table beside his bed. It was a few minutes past midnight. He tossed aside the bedclothes and went to the window. About twenty feet from the corner of the house someone had been digging a small hole. It looked like a miniature grave just big enough for a small dog or a baby.

Harry stood by the window listening. He could hear someone climbing the stairs to the floor above. A door opened and

there was a muffled sound like two people struggling. A woman began sobbing softly. He could hear the voice of a man trying to comfort her. The woman's sobs were more like moans, low, sing-song wrenching sounds. A door closed and someone came down the stairs and went out a door at the rear of the house.

Harry slowly opened the door to his room. He was at once startled by the odor. It was the same one he had noticed earlier, but much stronger now, as though whatever it was had passed very close to his room. He made his way through the dark to the door at the foot of the stairway. He could still hear the muffled sound of a woman weeping softly. The noise of digging started up again in the yard.

He stopped and wondered what exactly it was that he was doing here. If he could have had one wish it would be that he had forgotten about the war and Jack and this whole stupid thing. His second wish would be for a drink. He wasn't very adventurous and he certainly wasn't heroic. But he was curious. The thought of Mrs. Boyer as she had looked in the picture on the mantle leaped into his mind — that and the bars across the window. He opened the door and started up the stairs toward the weeping. The odor almost forced him back again. He made his way cautiously up the stairs to the stairs to the

attic level. Moving slowly, he pushed through the dark to the small room from which the sobbing was coming. Then he remembered what the odor was. It was the smell of a human body decaying. It was the smell of the dead GIs who had lain for weeks in foxholes. Something had died here months ago and not been buried, but kept in this room. The smell mingled with acrid odor of lye.

HARRY PUSHED open the door. The smell was enough to make him retch. A woman was sitting bolt upright in a straight-backed chair. Her body was wracked with sobbing. She turned her face to him and a single beam of light fell across her features. She was the oldest woman Harry had ever imagined. Her skin was cracked and yellow and her features pulled against her lifeless face as though they had been patched onto an empty skull. She had been weeping into a blue baby blanket that had fallen to her feet. Harry was certain now of what the odor had been and where it had come from. He knew, too, why Mr. Boyer was digging a hole and what he was burving in the yard.

Harry heard someone move behind him. He started to turn but something heavy caught him at the base of his skull. Everything was darkness. Somewhere in the distance, waves

were breaking against a beach.

He woke slowly the next morning. He had been dreaming about Jack's death. A German with a pointed black beard was bending over a long wooden box driving a stake through his heart. He opened his eyes against the brightness of the light and tried to raise his head. A sharp, searing pain stabbed through his neck and shoulders and forced him back down onto the pillow. Then he remembered where he was. He sat up in the bed and tried to roll out. The same pain caught at his wrists. He was chained to the bed.

Bit by bit and then all at once, the happenings of the night before drove against his brain. It was like being hit low in the stomach. Every muscle of his body tightened. He started to shout, but the words gagged in his throat.

The woman he had come upon the night before was sitting only a few feet from the edge of his bed. She was no longer crying. Her tight, yellow lips writhed in an idiotic smile. Her face was frozen into a grotesque mask of delirious pleasure. She was rocking slowly, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, back and . . .

HARRY PULLED against the chains. The sunlight streamed into the attic through the white and blue steel bars. He scream-

ed. He was chained to a small white bed in a small white and blue cage. The bars that ran between the floor and ceiling were white and laced through with blue ribbon. The walls were white. An oversized stuffed teddy bear was sitting in a small white chair in one corner against the bars. There was a pink and blue rabbit.

"Red and yellow, pink and blue . . . Hah . . . Hah . . . Hah."

The smell of the dead and decayed child mingled with the biting, but now predominant smell of disinfectant. He had to think . . . get help. These people? A dead baby and now . . . ? What? What? The cage? Was it for Jack? Or just anyone?

Harry cried out at the woman. "Please, please, don't do this. I'm not your baby. You're sick. You need help. You don't know what you're doing . . ."

"My, what a noisy baby. I'm so glad it's a boy . . . But what a noisy boy . . ."

She rocked back and forth, back . . . Her mouth split into

a grin like an open wound. The saliva ran down to her chin. Harry screamed out at her again.

The man came up the stairs. He was dressed in the clothes he might have been married in. He smiled at the woman and then at Harry, Baby Harry . . .

"He's such a nice, healthy baby. Listen to his scream. He'll be a Preacher. I just know he will . . . Preachers run in our family . . ."

The woman turned to look at her husband. A look of anxiety crossed her face.

"He won't be like the others? He won't go away? He's such a nice baby. The others weren't nice babies. They went away. Nice babies don't go away."

The man thought for a minute. He walked to the cage, rammed the door closed and slipped the lock through the steel hasp. He turned and smiled at the woman. *"He'll never go away. Not ever."*

Harry screamed, but nobody heard him.



The Burglar-Proof Vault

by Oliver Taylor

Back in the Thirties, it was sometimes a risky thing to read the blurb to a science fiction story, as some of the blurb writers apparently felt that the proper procedure was to summarize each story — or at least give the point away. We must confess that during our time in science fiction blurb writing, we inadvertently gave more away than we meant to, at times. So we shall take no chances whatsoever with the present strange tale.

THE THIEF crawled stealthily through the dark narrow tunnel running under the old Devonshire warehouse. At the end of the long passage he stopped for a moment; listened; but the only sound in this subterranean world was his own shallow breathing. Now on his belly, he proceeded cautiously. Turning upward, he climbed step by step, clinging to the loose clay walls, until he reached the brick and concrete base of the vault.

He examined the small area above him. Yesterday's work now seemed trivial; but he was not of that ilk to be discouraged

by the thickness of the vault's sheath. In the past few weeks he had methodically broken through the second layer of brick and penetrated several inches into the concrete floor, working almost round the clock. This was his first big chance in months and he needed the loot.

Feeling the top of the tunnel, he found the spot where the concrete was crumbly from his previous day's diggings. He began again. Both by choice and necessity he worked in darkness. For some strange reason he knew the secrets of this old

building: perhaps it was that they were inherited from his father who had been here long before him. But now he couldn't remember their source; the memory apparently was buried in the inner recesses of his limited brain.

Tentatively he stuck his head into the hole he had made in the ceiling of the passageway. Then, straightening his long lean body, he thrust his feet into the soft clay until he had gained a firm foothold. Machine-like, he dug at the mortar, rested, and then dug and dug again. The flying chips restored his dwindling confidence. His energetic movements became merely extensions of his will, short rapid strokes automatically pushing pieces past his hot body.

Hours passed . . .

His frantic and planless speed began to create obstacles. The growing pile of loose mortar almost choked off the bottom of the vertical segment of the passageway. Some of the debris had been scattered by his daily trips in and out of the tunnel, but most of it remained at the bend where the tube-like opening turned upward to the vault. Sensing that danger, he lowered himself to the corner and dispersed the fragments along the horizontal section of the corridor.

Then he climbed back to resume his operations.

There was a strange intensity about him as he drilled and hacked away, permitting no smile of camaraderie and isolating him from his fellows. Although he had a family, his was a solitary disposition; he liked best to work alone.

He found himself pausing more frequently, partly to rest from his labor, and partly to listen for footsteps of possible intruders. Thus far he had been fortunate. None of the other thieves in town had tried to muscle in on him. Last year, though, he had run into a rash of trouble. The area was loaded with pilferers and it seemed there was no honor among them. Last winter, in the early morning hours, while he was in the act of robbing a warehouse, another burglar had attacked him from behind. They fought viciously for several bloody and terrible minutes, and he fled shamelessly after the fight, leaving the spoils to his attacker. His parents would have approved. They practiced the maxim that discretion was always the better part of valor. At least he didn't have to squeal on the interloper for the sounds of fighting attracted a night watchman who caught the greedy victim with the goods. Life had a way of providing antidotes and revenges even for professional criminals.

HE RUBBED the scars on his

prominent nose and then proceeded with the excavation. By wedging his slender frame between jutting edges of brick and concrete he found he could get a firmer support for his body. The air now was filled with fragments and the flakes stuck to his brown coat like frosted snow.

Heavy footfalls echoed somewhere in the darkness. He paused, rigid with fear, listening. Was it in the passageway? Or the vault? *Thump! Thump! Thump!* All of his muscles tensed, ready for flight. Then came the familiar vibration of the floor above his head, the tapping footsteps getting closer and closer. Suddenly a new rasping note struck his ear — that of the dreaded night stick. He froze. His heart raced. Then dead silence. His waiting was finally rewarded by the rhythmic cadence of singing; the words were muffled and unintelligible. The masculine voice, a bit young, faded away, and he breathed easily again.

He returned to his digging. The hole now was large enough to admit his head and sloping shoulders. While his small bone structure was a blessing in these tight places, there was the question of energy, for his last meal, a hastily gobbled piece of stale sandwich and some milk stolen from a neighbor's kitchen, barely gave him sufficient strength to finish the job.

Lesser criminals would have given up long ago — nor could many have endured this mole-like method of burglary. Even his father, who was an expert, might have surrendered to this seemingly impregnable fortress.

He reached up and pulled out a chunk of cracked concrete. Then he stepped back to let it fall. Thrusting forward, he could now feel the rusted sheet of metal that formed the inner floor of the vault. His work almost finished, he stood as erect as the cramped quarters would allow, braced his slender legs on the ragged edges of the wall and pushed hard against the iron, probing for that last weak spot. To his right was a small circle where rust had nearly eaten through. These old warehouse buildings always had antiquated vaults.

Expressionless, he pushed, he scraped, he pulled at the circle. Rotted brown flakes flew. The loot was now only inches away.

Patience and perseverance would pay him handsomely. He might have become a success in respected endeavors if he had directed his boundless energy to more constructive pursuits, but his type was predestined for the underworld. People instinctively recoiled at the sight of his ugly, scar-infested face. Women especially despised him — their sense of the aesthetic seemed to be upset by his sinister counte-

nance. Yet his manner in their presence was not in any way aggressive and compared to other males he had observed he was quite obsequious. In fact timidity was his strong point, allowing him complete concentration on burglaries, making him a professional who never left a clue, not even a smudged fingerprint. But, like his father, he always had wished that he were someone else, doing something else.

Once again he felt the strange emptiness and loneliness of that day when his father disappeared from the watchman's office — for although the old man was grouchy at times, he did sing cheerful little ballads that filled the air with gaiety as he went about his guard duties, and dispelled the whirring aura of impatience that hung about the busy warehouse. He remembered singing these songs himself long ago but somehow, somewhere the ancient lyrics had vanished in the mists of his unreliable memory.

DARK-EYED AND bullet-headed, with a moustache that started out to be of a British Cavalry type but ended in a few scraggly whiskers, he was certainly a shabby looking affair. Only his family could love him. His home though was squalid, hardly a place for better behavior patterns; and after his father's disappearance it became even worse, a dank and depress-

ing place of rust and decay

As he dug away, oblivious of time and place, he almost missed distant dull thuds. Suddenly, he stopped, shifted nervously in his cramped position and strained his ears. Heavy footfalls, growing louder, rattled the metal floor; the din became tumultuous, almost deafening. Rising terror made him shake convulsively. Not knowing whether to run or to remain, he stood transfixed. Never in all of his experience was he comfortable in the presence of night watchmen; they were so unexpected, so sneaky. Three years ago, as a novice, he came within inches of losing his life in a grocer's shop robbery. His would-be captor had lunged, tripped and fallen, hitting him as he fled, across the back with a heavy night stick. His spine still ached from the blow, and his fear of authorities now was mixed with a blind hatred. To him they represented evil just as he represented evil to them. And yet, he had never participated in armed robbery, nor had he ever tried to kill or harm policemen. In his simple, single-minded devotion to his work, he could not understand why they were always so vindictive; but on his grim features was a set fanaticism, not simple criminality.

The watchman's footsteps became lighter — disappeared — the rattling ceased. The dreaded enemy of the night was gone.

He gritted his uneven teeth and braced himself for a final thrust at the iron barrier. On the threshold of success, he found his strength ebbing, but even though hunger gnawed and sucked at his stomach he had no intention of giving up or resting.

He scraped furiously on the ancient iron and loosened a few odd chips; he pushed. Nothing budged. His breath in this very warm confinement was coming in short, shallow gasps, his lungs almost bursting. The end was in sight. He paused, drew back, and then hurled his full weight against the barrier. Nothing happened. It seemed impossible. Desperation sent a surge of renewed power through him, and he put everything he had into what might be his last effort. A big chip flaked off and he sucked his breath. Suddenly the fetid air became cooler and the musty odor of old documents assailed his nostrils. He sniffed the sweet smell of success as a pale pinpoint of light illumined the walls of the tunnel. Somewhere above him there was a tiny crack in the iron floor, a foothold. Nitroglycerine would have been quicker, but he had never learned to use it.

In tight-lipped silence he reached up, searching for the fissure. When he felt its rough edges he went into a frenzy of scraping, heedless of the racket it was making.

The unexpected *flap-flap* of paper sent a cold shiver down his spine. He paused; listened. He heard papers scudding across the floor, as if some alien gust of wind had whipped and whirled them through the open door of the vault. Had the watchman come back? Trembling, he wavered, about to break into a run. Then there descended on the iron room a heavy stillness punctuated by faint buzzings of a bluebottle fly.

HE WAITED, rigid for a moment, all ears, and then he returned to his digging. Somehow the mixture of fear and desperation had rejuvenated him; they had the effect of nourishing his starved muscles. He worked wildly now, losing all track of time and fatigue, as he poked and scraped at the tiny crack in the iron. He heard the metallic grating sounds gradually dissolve into dullness. The texture of the floor became soft, pliable. He had reached the film of crusted oil and dirt that separated him from the interior of the vault.

Excited, he broke through the floor, catching a whisker on the jagged metal. He winced with pain as he drew back. Moustaches were a nuisance on these capers. The rest of his hair though was conveniently brush-cut short.

Softly, stealthily he stuck his head through the opening and

looked around. The blinding light caused him to blink. Lost in feverish activity, he was unaware that it was high noon. Night had passed, unnoticed, and now surrounded by the unexpected blazing glare, he once again experienced an overwhelming desire to run. But he hesitated; there was a friendly silence in the iron room. Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the light, he steadied himself and stared at a long shadow silhouetted against the back of the vault. A rustling sound stabbed at his ears; he twisted round. In the doorway stood a big man, looming like a giant in the weird glow of sunlight. The towering figure raised a long club — back into the hole he shrank. The club descended in a fast whipping arc, jarring the floor. Dislodged, he fell to the bottom of the passageway, tearing his coat on its jagged walls. He landed on his back. Turning painfully on the mortar chips, he rolled over and over, got on his feet and crawled toward the feeble gleam of light at the mouth of the tunnel.

There was a stinging wetness on his side and then agonizing pain as blood oozed from slashes caused by sharp edges of brick and concrete.

At the entrance, concealed from the streets by a thick patch of shrubbery, he spun around and looked back. The corridor

was a black wall, somber and motionless. His pursuer was not in sight, but he could hear faint echoes of his pounding on the floor of the vault. No doubt the man was too big for the narrow tunnel. He looked up. The grim gothic stone of the warehouse loomed, dismal and silent, in the bright sky; its ugly grayness seemed to challenge the beauty of the daylight world. Turning from it, he ran across the sun-stunned square and passed quickly by the ancient Norman buildings that huddled against the pavements. This was the dead hour of the afternoon and few people were about. A policeman, standing at a corner, was talking with an elderly woman, and neither of them noticed his headlong flight.

Dashing into a side street, he stumbled on the curb and sprawled on the cobblestones. He struggled to his feet but exhaustion pulled him back. Prodded now by the sharp stings in his side, he rose, laboring for breath, and hurried along a familiar pathway worn smooth by centuries of footfalls. Soon he was clear of the confinement of the business district. He paused to rest for a moment against the wall of a narrow, fetid *cul de sac*. He had to take whatever rest and refuge he could find for there were no doctors available to him.

Every step now was torture but he kept moving until he

found himself at the foot of a steep hill. He paused again, gasping for breath. Then, climbing wearily, he finally reached the top, halted, and looked back. It seemed that no one was following him. The long bleak path, edged with small boulders and a few scattered bushes, stretched ahead for several hundred feet and then abruptly wound its way in a corkscrew down to a silent valley. A thin strip of whitish mist, blown from desolate moors, rimmed the low hills beyond. The brooding mist seemed to mock him, and hate stared out of his eyes — for the path — for the world — for the whole human race which he so greatly despised.

WHEN HE heard the mournful wail of a hound reverberating somewhere in the valley far below, he hid behind a rhododendron bush, listening, trying to determine the direction of the alarm. He waited. Nothing stirred, not even a leaf or a cloud or a living thing. Sound itself was an enemy in this noiselessness. Suddenly a bluebottle fly buzzed from the bush, hovered overhead for an instant and then disappeared in the bright spring sky.

A vagrant wind swept the rim of mist in a great swirling cloud over the valley to the edge of the hill, and he watched, rigid and expectant, as its white vapors rose in a huge funnel above

the path ahead. At first all was formless, white and moving — shifting and inconstant; tenuous and clinging. And then through the dimness he saw the hazy outline of the old warehouse emerge, barring his way. Its massive oaken doors opened and the haze like some hideous tide of flesh flowed from the long wood bones of the building's inner structure and exposed dark metal walls of the great vault. The damp, dead odor of mould reeked in his nostrils and from the shimmering mists floated the haunting strains of an ancient English ballad. He shrank away, started to turn back. Then suddenly the wind whistled up the sides of the hill and blew the mist from the path. The spectral silhouette of the warehouse vanished in the sky. The singing ceased.

For a breathless minute he stood transfixed in the silence. There was a crushing stillness and desolation about the hilltop, a shadow of unseen things that seemed to lurk in the boulders and bushes. When he moved again he felt an odd shrinking sensation and a staggering dizziness enveloped him. Dazed, he began crawling in a slow zigzag down the narrow pathway which seemed much longer and wider and more circuitous than before. Now and again a bramble flung out a strangling arm, and clutched with a hooked black claw at his legs. Knife-like

pains stabbed at his sides and he spurted ahead, faster and faster. In agony now he drove himself blindly along the path, like a bug beating against a window, fear and pain forcing his aching limbs into fresh movement. Limping, he scuttled down the other side of the long hill, each step draining him a little at a time of his life's blood.

If only he could get to his house.

Somebody had ratted on him, had informed the warehouse authorities. Their timing had been perfect. Too perfect. His father once was chief guard in charge of that accursed vault — it seemed centuries ago — and he had learned their schedule from him. It was strange then, how this robbery had failed so miserably. But he would try again, later, in some other way.

Near the foot of the hillside, something in the heavy air pulled at him, something powerful and persistent, trying to warn . . . Was he lost? Circling? He stopped suddenly, looked over his shoulder. The hill top was clear now but it seemed somehow that the black vault was still there, standing as stern and implacable as a judge waiting to sentence him. The vault was a screw on the ever-tightening circle of his brain, twisting his consciousness backward in time until he no longer knew whether he was man or beast. He knew only that he must flee

from its invisible presence . . .

IN THE valley now, he limped past rows of white houses shining across tended strips of lawn, window boxes drooping lovely greenery, small crocus beds and yellow jonquils resting like birds against the warm earth.

At last he was home.

He crawled painfully to his corner of darkness in the cellar and flopped down, exhausted. A gray flannel of mould sat like a lid overhead and made the cavernous room a closed pot. From somewhere, distant and faint, came the lilting sound of a song. Then the terrible shrinking pain enfolded him again, and his sight dimmed until the mouldy walls and ceiling disappeared in mistiness. He listened indifferently to the footsteps of those in the house and then he wrapped his long tail around his brown body, closed his beady blinded eyes and shut out death and time.

He began to dream. His home was no longer a cellar, but a narrow tunnel and he was stumbling along it. Away at the end he could see something standing, waiting. The thing smiled a horrid smile of hatred and moved toward him. As the misty figure came nearer, he could hear its heavy breathing, feel its ugly eyes staring in the darkness. And then suddenly it was beside him, swirling around

him and over him. His bullet head swivelled round, desperately searching for an exit, and he saw that the tunnel was an endless blackness. He turned away but the horror was still on him, clinging like mist.

* * * *

THE LANKY young guard laid his club on a shelf in the big vault and slowly shook his blond head. Frowning, he stooped and examined the hole in the iron floor. It seemed incredible that the burglar-proof vault had been cracked on his first day as Chief Guard. At least he had thwarted the thief. His long, thin face broke into a smile at the thought — the nature of the crime was a bit ludicrous — and he straightened up and walked toward the doorway into his office. At the threshold, he hesitated; listened. He looked over his shoulder. A lone bluebottle fly droned wearily against the mouldy wall, butting its head frequently, fatalistically.

He turned and seated himself in the oversized swivel chair just outside the massive iron door. Leaning forward, he picked a shiny new plastic name plate from the cluttered desk and rubbed his long fingers appreciatively over the raised letters. JOHN COMPTON. He had to make good in this promotion — perhaps the timely prevention of a burglary would

convince the authorities that he was on his toes.

Young Compton's predecessor, a big grouchy fat man named Ruste, who walked with a slight limp and masked his pain and discontent with song, had built an enviable reputation for patience and perseverance. But last week, right in the middle of the day, Ruste had disappeared — one minute he was at this desk and the next, he was gone. Oh well, Compton shrugged his narrow shoulders and smiled; the sudden disappearance was a bonanza. He always had coveted Ruste's job; in plain fact he hated the former Chief Guard and even suspected him of being an accomplice of thieves. Some time ago he had informed the warehouse manager of his suspicions.

The buzzing of the fly grew louder, echoing in the vault.

Compton shifted nervously in the big chair and then started dialing the Construction Department to request repairs on the vault. He felt unusually ill-at-ease today. As he dialed, a wisp of fetid air reeking with the staleness of age old documents, was wafted through the room. His finger slipped.

"Damn!" muttered Compton.

This new promotion had its drawbacks. When he was a mere assistant he patrolled the main floors of the huge warehouse, gossiping with the stevedores while checking the stored

items, but here in this isolated guardroom his only companion was the vault with its odors of moulding records, some dating back to the 17th century. Except for the once-a-day reports of the watchmen he seldom heard a human voice. He sang ballads occasionally to dispel the lonely silences.

A slight rustling sound caught his attention. Looking up sharply from the phone, he saw his assistant, Barnard, standing at the outer door to the high-ceilinged office. Startled, Compton dropped the instrument and stared. Barnard, of medium height, somehow seemed taller than usual, like a giant there in the doorway.

Compton opened his mouth to speak but the words stuck in his throat. Then his lips moved and very faint sounds came forth:

"Whatta yuh want, Barnard?"

Barnard, his long face blank, stepped into the room and didn't answer. It was almost as though he saw no one, heard nothing.

Compton started to rise, seething. He'd show this impertinent assistant who had authority here. But just then his ankle twisted and he pitched forward, crashing full-length on the floor. Rolling over, he writhed to his feet and looked up. The chair towered above him like a great oak scaffold; the ceiling hovered mistily almost beyond the boundaries of his vision. His

back ached and a strange emptiness, a hunger, gnawed away at his insides as if starved muscles were shrivelling. He fought down the unnatural sensation and tried to think, to orient himself. There was a subtle something in the heavy air that happened, unseen, everywhere he looked. His eyes fixed angrily on Barnard.

"You dirty r . . ." The words choked off in his throat. He cursed soundlessly.

The fly buzzed hard against a wall in the vault, then was silent.

HEAVY FOOTFALLS shook the floor — Barnard was moving towards him with giant floating strides. Compton raised his hands to his face, covering his eyes, as if to dispel a hallucination, and then he felt deep scars on his long nose. His cheeks went in on themselves, like clenching a fist, like withering an apple in a bin. He squirmed in an agony of shrinking. Mouth dry, body numb, he took stock of himself as his hands went wildly to feel the the shortening legs on his rounding trunk, to twist and pull at the tightening skin, to fumble about the protruding thin-lipped mouth. Then he looked down with appalled eyes: his legs were spindly appendages, claw-like, and his dark blue uniform was a mangy drab brown. And his arms and hands . . .

On all fours he crawled into the vault.

The tiny hole in the floor yawned before him, like some black abyss, and wisps of cool vapor ghosted from its depths and curled upward. At its edge, Compton crouched tensely, battling to collect his wits. But his brain was a tight knot of numbness. Twisting round, he faced the door and watched Barnard stride across the office toward him. The big man seemed an agent of incarnate evil, dark eyes glittering with hate, loathing. The footsteps grew louder. *Thump! Thump! Thump!* Compton couldn't afford to panic — that was the one thought he must cling to. Keep thinking, keep trying to use his wits. Avoid those penetrating eyes, those ponderous feet!

Barnard's hulk passed over the wide threshold, stepped quickly into the musty vault. He lifted the club from its shelf. *Smash!* Compton felt the floor shake as he dodged the violent blow. Staggering off balance, he tumbled backward and his body whirled into cool darkness.

Compton groped wildly, clung for a second to jagged edges of concrete and then fell to the bottom of the passageway. Benumbed, he looked up. Through the dimness he could see Barnard standing over the hole and staring down at him; and he stared back with a blind

hatred that burned like hell-coals in his eyes.

The shrill, insistent buzzing of the bluebottle fly again broke the silence.

Compton started at the sound, wheeled headlong on the heaps of mortar chips, and ripped his coat. Raging with pain, he began to crawl through the murky corridor. When he had squeezed past a restricted part of the passageway, he felt suddenly that he knew all the twists and turns of the long tube. It seemed almost as if he had been here before, long ago.

Ahead, the blackness stretched and writhed like an expectant living thing waiting to engulf him in its convolutions. He recoiled in horror. With sudden clarity, he saw his own life as an endless tunnel of greed, of hate — and this underworld as his destiny. But he could take no consolation from the thought that the same fate might befall his successor, for his brain, at the end of its tether, had reached the snapping point.

Weakly defiant, Compton switched his long tail at the darkness. Then the buzzing faded from his ears. Now he heard the familiar haunting strains of an ancient English ballad. Tail rigid, he listened. But the words were no longer intelligible to him.

A scream rose inside his shrunken brown body, and he could not let it out.

The Dead Who Walk

by Ray Cummings

RAY (mond King) CUMMINGS was one of the "old masters" of science fiction in the eyes of readers and fans when we first started reading science fiction regularly in 1930. His best works were behind him, then, although a good one, *Brigands of the Moon* (Ace Books D324) was running currently in *ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE*, and two more fine ones were to follow: *The Exile of Time* (Avalon Books, 1964) in 1931 and *Wandl, the Invader* (Ace Books D497) in 1932 — both serials in *ASTOUNDING STORIES*. The earlier works were out of print, in old issues of the Munsey magazines, or were not carried in local libraries. Cummings' father owned orange groves in Puerto Rico, and young Ray (born in 1887) traveled widely with a tutor, studied physics at Princeton, and by the age of twenty had worked in Wyoming oil fields, gone gold-hunting in British Columbia and timber cruising in the North. Between 1914-19, he was personal assistant to Thomas A. Edison, and facsimiles of his signature appear on many of the labels of Edison records. Unlike other science fiction writers, who chose either Verne or Wells for literary father, Cummings chose both. Many of his short stories are little more than scientific treatises in fictional form, giving facts and interesting speculations in barely narrative form. These make charming reading today, despite the fact that there are no characters in them, really, and much of the "science" is outmoded by far. His novels, however, lean toward Wells, since the "science" is philosophical speculation for the most part, his main interest being in human motivation and character within a fantastic setting. He was not a social prophet like Wells, and to the last, his tales have a Victorian flavor about them. In this present age of violence and demonic character-exploration, his "villains" all show a strange touch of gentleness about them. There is another peculiarity about his writing, which was more noticeable in the early tales. (The present one first appeared in 1931 and can be considered "late" Cummings, although the author continued to write and sell up to the '50's — he died in 1957.) Although his command of English is fluent, there are definite traces of Spanish in his style, inversions of syntax and word arrangement which are natural to Spanish, and short phrases which are not sentences at all in English. (While the latter trait has become common enough in popular writing, it was not common to the Victorian-bred pulp magazine auth-

ors of the '20's, during which the bulk of Cummings' notable fiction was written.) He did not write very much weird fiction until the deplorable "terror" magazines began to mushroom in the middle 30's. The present tale bears a theme that is rarely found in weird fiction, although it is based upon well-established teachings in occult philosophy and is not unknown to psychology. Cummings' first story, *The Girl in the Golden Atom*, appeared in *ALL-STORY WEEKLY* in 1919, was published in book form in London in 1922, and in the U. S. in 1923; reprints have been too many to trace, and we cannot be sure that it has not appeared again since its inclusion in the *Giant Anthology of Science Fiction* in 1954. To the best of our knowledge, the present novelet has not appeared in magazines since its advent in 1931.

YOUNG Kent Cavendish lay dying. The small boarding house bedroom was dim and silent. I sat motionless in the corner, watching the bed where Kent lay, with my sister Anne sitting beside him. He hardly seemed able to breathe, and his face, almost as white now as the pillow on which it rested, showed just beyond Anne's hunched shoulder. Anne was sobbing softly. It was the only sound in the room.

A strange business, this life. Four days ago, Kent Cavendish had been at the peak of his youth and strength; twenty-five years old, in this Spring of 1931, and a laughing blond giant. He was my best friend; engaged to marry my sister.

And now Kent was dying. Nothing could save him; the doctors were sure of it. They had tried and failed. I stirred in my chair. I had hardly moved for hours, and Anne had been sitting there by the bed all night. The dawn was coming now; we could see it at the win-

dow, its flat light paling the stars. Dr. French would return presently, but there was nothing that he could do.

Kent had been stricken by a malady that was both strange and baffling. For a few days both Anne and I had noticed him acting queerly. He seemed harassed; disturbed. I recalled saying laughingly, "Kent, what's the matter with you?" And it seemed that a wild fear, mingled with a look unnamable had leaped into his eyes. He had not answered; he had frowned finally, and turned away.

He acted queerly for a few days and then he was stricken with a sudden fainting spell that soon turned into this coma of death in which he now lay. I had done my best to question the physicians. The heart was very slow and very weak, and stimulants had failed. It was slowing and weakening hourly, and, at the same time, the blood temperature was cooling. It was as though, without illness, with his body and all his organs in

perfect health and strength, life was slowly draining away.

The coma was now almost catalepsy. The respiration was so faint it was hardly perceptible; the pulse could barely be felt. Scientific details! I contemplated bitterly how meaningless and futile science can be in the face of the Great Mystery.

The dawn-light at the windows grew a little brighter. It was four o'clock — the hour Dr. French had said when all man's vital forces are at their lowest ebb and death so frequently comes to the dying. . . . Anne was still softly crying and I moved on tiptoe across the room to join her; and, with my arm about her, I murmured what comfort I could. She was disheveled, her face pale from lack of sleep. The long black tresses of her hair had fallen to her shoulders unnoticed.

We sat staring as the dawn-light crept in and lay upon young Kent's face. The face was like a mask, the eyes closed, the lips slightly parted. This face, this body lying so still under the sheet was but a shell. Somewhere inside it the identity of Kent Cavendish was making ready to depart.

I murmured, "Anne, he's going!"

It seemed that the eyelids were twitching. And then, suddenly, they lifted, blue windows to the house of his Ego. I stared

into the eyes of my friend. What was there behind those windows?

"Anne! He — he's going."

I held my breath, and pressed my sister tightly against me, watching this transition which marks the mortal end of us all. We both knew it was at hand. Anne's sobs were stilled by awe for a moment, and she, too, held her breath.

The eyes stayed open. Perhaps there had been a little light there which suddenly was there no longer. Whatever the change, I knew that my friend was gone.

And Anne's sobs came again. And through her grief came her wild, protesting cry, "Oh, Kent, Kent dear, I don't want you to die! I don't want you to die!"

IT RAINED the afternoon of the funeral. The little cortege consisted of Kent's employer, Anne, myself, and a few friends. There were no relatives, for Kent was an Englishman, working in the factory of a well-known airplane manufacturer in this small New Jersey town, some thirty miles from New York City.

The slopes of the Orange Mountains lay ghostly in the mist with the somber drizzle of the rain upon them as we drove to the cemetery. The interment was late in the afternoon of a day in mid-May. The little group gathered at the grave

heard the minister speak his few words of consolation. Anne stood beside a tree, a small, slim figure, black-garbed now, with her face as white as the ghostly mist that hung over the graveyard.

I was with her, and neither of us spoke. Then the minister solemnly signed us to come forward. We went together, and gazed with a last longing look at the handsome features of Kent Cavendish. It was a waxen face now; a peaceful-looking house, untenanted and closed. I stared at the face of my friend. Where was Kent Cavendish now? Like a great riddle, that question has rung down the ages.

The coffin lid was fastened and the casket lowered gently to its last resting place. At the thud of the first spadeful of earth I felt a shudder sweep over Anne.

"Easy, Anne . . ."

She did not cry. She just stood, staring over the wet green countryside as though her gaze could penetrate the hanging white mists and reach the Beyond.

The grave was filled at last, with a little mound on top. The headstone which I had already ordered would be placed there in a week. Kent's employer had said, just a moment ago, "Kent Cavendish was a fine young man. A character strong and upright. He had the will to con-

quer. He would have gone far had he been spared."

So strange that one like that should be taken, and the weak, the defective, useless to themselves and to the world, live on. Who can fathom it?

The little group at the graveside moved toward their waiting automobiles. The minister turned up his coat collar, replaced his hat on his head and shivered; he was an old man, and the wind off the wet mountains had a nasty chill to it. He bowed to us as he hurried toward his car.

"Good day, Mr. Rollins — Miss Anne. He was a fine lad — the finest."

"Good night, sir," I said. "And thank you — thank you very much. Come, Anne, dear. It's over."

The wet shadows of twilight were gathering as we slowly drove away. We both gazed back at the little mound of earth as our car topped a rise of the road.

So passed Kent Cavendish.

II

ANNE AND I had come from a small mid-western town to work in the same factory which had employed Kent Cavendish. Anne was secretary to one of the executives, and I, like Kent, was a test pilot. We had been here in Maple Grove less than a year. Like Kent, too,

we lived in the same boarding house where Kent had lived, and had died.

At nine o'clock the night of the funeral, I was alone in my bedroom when Dr. French, Kent's attending physician, called on me.

"Have him come up," I told the girl who came with the message. I stood up to receive the solemn, gray-haired physician.

"Good evening, Rollins. I wanted to talk to you," he said as he closed the hall door after him. "Your sister — it's not exactly something for her to hear. I've some questions I want to ask you. She isn't —"

"She's in her room, Dr. French, just down the hall; but she couldn't hear us. Sit down. She's asleep, I guess. The poor kid is exhausted."

"Quite so." The doctor seated himself. The light from the table lamp fell upon him, and I saw that for all his brusque professional manner he was nervous. His fingers trembled as he lighted a cigarette.

"About Kent Cavendish, Rollins. You're a discreet young man; what I say is in strict confidence. You know, of course, that I and my colleagues have not the faintest conception of what killed Cavendish?"

"I — I gathered so, Doctor."

"Quite so. It's a strange case — I would say unique. In writing it up for our reports — as we will, of course — we want

all the information possible. You and your sister knew him best. You told me he acted strangely those few days before he was stricken. Just what did you mean by that?"

I shifted uneasily in my chair and for a moment was silent. I wanted to explain, but when I tried to think what had been the matter with Kent, there seemed no words to fit my groping thoughts. Yet, undeniably, something had been wrong; Anne, too, had noticed it and spoken of it.

"Well, Dr. French, it seems — well, I don't know just what to say more than I told you before. He did not seem himself."

It startled me as I said it, and it startled the doctor. "What do you mean by that?"

"I — why, nothing, I guess. I mean, it was unusual, unnatural for Kent to be anything but light-hearted. He always laughed at almost everything; he saw a laugh in life, Dr. French. He often said you could conquer life best with a laugh."

"And then he changed? Suddenly?"

"Yes. Suddenly. He seemed harassed. There was something — something the matter with him."

"Not ill?" Doctor French asked.

"No. He said he was not. He did not seem ill. I never knew anyone more perfectly healthy."

The doctor nodded gravely.

"Quite so. He had a perfect body. A young giant — a perfect physical and mental specimen of manhood. Yet he was stricken and in three days he died — with nothing the matter with him." The physician gave way momentarily to his emotion. "We don't like a thing of this sort, Rollins. It makes you feel — well, baffled, helpless — ineffectual. He was not ill before he was stricken, not physically. Mentally ill, then, you say, harassed?"

"Harassed. I can't think of any other word, Doctor. Something was bothering him, worrying him."

"Not business?"

"No."

"Not your — sister?"

"That would be the last thing. They were ideally happy, Dr. French. I don't think — I can't imagine how Kent could have been anything but happy."

"Something less tangible, then" The physician leaned forward and lowered his voice. "I won't be secretive with you, Rollins. This Cavendish isn't the only case. He is the first, but not the last, quite evidently, for I've just been notified of another. In Summit Hill this time. A young fellow, and strong — a giant young fellow."

THE DOCTOR'S voice was extraordinarily solemn. "He's dying — he'll die of course. I was just over there to see him,

and he was lying stricken, like Cavendish — dying of nothing that can be named. God, it's — it's frightening to us, I tell you."

To Dr. French and me, as we sat for half an hour longer in the little bedroom discussing it, the thing seemed to presage dire events. A death here in this house; another, tonight, in a neighboring town. Suppose the malady were to spread? We talked for half an hour more, groping for the Unknown, perhaps the Unknowable, and we realized it.

When the doctor had left, I went down the upper hall and tiptoed into Anne's bedroom. She lay asleep, exhausted by grief. I covered her up, smoothed the tangle of her hair on the pillow, and brushed a tress of it with my lips. Anne and I had been as close, all our lives, as sister and brother can be, and I never loved her more than now.

Turning away, I pulled her door softly to a narrow crack and went back to my room. Kent's bedroom had been next to mine, with Anne's a dozen feet away. All of them were on the second floor of the big frame house.

I went to bed. It was not yet ten o'clock, but I, too, was exhausted. I left my hall door ajar so that I could hear Anne if she called. For a long time, I could not sleep; I lay in the darkened room, listening to the

melancholy drip of the rain outside the opened window and thinking over what the doctor had told me.

I drifted off finally, and awakened with a start. Something had awakened me! I could not imagine what, and then I thought it had been the sound of someone in the upper hall. I lay listening, and realized now that I had been asleep some hours. The drip-drip from the eaves had stopped. The night evidently was clearing; my shade, drawn partly up, disclosed moonlight outside.

Had a step awakened me? I seemed dimly to remember it. A married couple occupied a nearby bedroom. I was drifting off to sleep again when I heard, quite distinctly, the sound of someone moving. Then I came to full wakefulness with a shock. Someone, outside in the upper hall, was moving stealthily back and forth. Footsteps were advancing, retreating; then came a chair rasping on the floor.

I leaped soundlessly out of bed. The bedroom was dark save for straggling moonlight, and the slit of yellow glow at the partly opened door from the dim hall-light outside. I drew the door open, softly. I could still hear the sound of someone moving, but now I realized it wasn't in the hall; it was in the bedroom adjacent to mine — the bedroom in which Kent had died. Someone was

in there. The footsteps, the occasional movement of furniture — someone in there was busy at something.

I was unarmed. I stood a moment, listening, in the shadow of my own doorway, when the adjacent bedroom door suddenly opened inward. But no one came out.

I stiffened, waiting. I could not see into the adjacent bedroom from where I stood, but it was dimly lighted, and the glow of its light streamed into the hall. The sounds of its occupant were plainer now. Someone was in there, surreptitiously opening bureau drawers. The landlady? Why should she be packing up Kent's things or rifling his belongings at this hour?

I found myself moving quietly out into the hall, reaching a shadowed place from which I could see over the threshold into Kent's room. A man was packing Kent's clothes into Kent's suitcase which lay on the bed in which Kent had died. He had opened the door — evidently to get more air — for as the bedroom light gleamed on his white face I saw that it was beaded with sweat.

And the man was Kent Cavendish!

III

"KENT! Good God — you?"
I had not intended to speak,

but to draw back into the shadows of the hallway and watch; the cry came from me involuntarily.

Kent stood transfixed in the center of his bedroom. I recall that in those few seconds I was aware that he was dressed in the clothes with which his body had been robed for burial — a business suit, white negligee shirt and neat bow-tie. The tie was pulled askew now and the shirt collar unbuttoned beneath it as though its constraint had choked him.

The mind receives instant impressions, flashing thoughts, crowded into a few seconds. This was Kent Cavendish unquestionably — not someone who much resembled him, but Kent himself. For all the fantastic strangeness of it, that fact I never doubted.

"Kent!"

I found myself in front of his doorway. He had finished putting the shirts into his suitcase and stood stiffened for those few seconds. Then he turned and saw me.

"You!" His voice was low, furtive, but it was Kent's familiar voice; I could not mistake it. "You!"

"But Kent — good God! Why, Kent —"

Joy swept me. He was alive; he had not been dead. He had come to his senses and escaped from his coffin. Such things had happened before.

I rushed to him. He took a sudden step sideways, but the room was narrow between the bedside and the wall. I met him; flung my arms around him; gripped his hand. It was cold, and dank with sweat. The sweat stood in beads on his face. He was a head taller than I; and as I gazed up at him I saw a flush mount into his white cheeks.

"Kent! What happened! Why, you're alive. Tell me! Sit down. Tell me!"

I tried to draw him toward the bed. I was still incoherent with the shock and the joy of having him alive. But I felt him resist me; and again he said, "You!"

The only word he had uttered. Why was that? What was the matter with him? A doubt struck at me, some thought that told me to be careful, to watch what I was doing. I felt a touch of fear, but I thrust the doubt away. A man who had just escaped from his coffin — how could I expect him not to act strangely?

He had seemed impelled to escape me; but abruptly he yielded and sat on the bed.

"You — you're surprised?"

"Surprised? Good Heavens, Kent. What an experience for you! What happened? Why, we thought you were dead. But you're not. I'll go get Anne. She —"

His hand was gripping my

arm. His blue eyes searched my face and then they shifted away as though afraid of me.

"Anne? Anne?" he stammered. "She —"

"She'll be so happy. Why, Kent —"

I checked myself. The instinct, the realization came now — so strongly that I could not deny it — that I was coping with the Unknown. With my mention of Anne came a caution, a singular sensation of caution, something telling me to go slowly.

"Kent, what's the matter with you?" I shook off his hold. "You act very strangely."

"Nothing. There is nothing ailing me. I'm all right — now."

"A horrible shock, of course. Tell me about it. You're not ill? Recovered? How did you —"

"I'm all right now. Just now, I would rather not talk of it."

"I can imagine." His words momentarily reassured me. "We'll phone Dr. French. Good Lord, it will shock him, as it did me. What an escape, Kent! Anne will be —"

MY NERVES had been so shocked I was anything but master of myself or my words. I was still incoherent. But once again came that inner warning, and this time it startled me into complete alertness. The excitement dropped from me, to be supplanted by a tense wariness. What was Kent doing here, surreptitiously packing his things?

He said, "Be careful you do not alarm the house. No use — not yet."

I drew back from him. "All right. Whatever you say." He had lowered his voice and I lowered mine. "You're packing up. Going away, Kent?"

"Yes. Away."

He said it vaguely. He stood up, his gaze roving about the room. "Yes. Away." But he made no move; he seemed undecided what to do. Then he added, "I am very hungry. Could you — would you show me the larder, where I could find provisions?"

"Why — why, yes, Kent. Of course."

"I give you thanks."

Kent's familiar voice, but what a strange manner — and what words! The larder where he could find provisions! Kent knew where the kitchen was; he and I had often made midnight raids upon Mrs. Green's icebox!

The caution within me made me hold my surprise in check. "I should think you would be hungry. That's a good sign. Shall we go downstairs?"

"Yes, if you will."

"Come on then. But quietly, Kent, if you don't want anyone to hear us. I'll get my robe and slippers."

He signed for me to take the lead. I went quickly into my own room, leaving him at my door. Those were horrible seconds to me, having him out

there with Anne's room so near. I realized that I was afraid of him. It was not the old Kent. This was different, wholly different. It was Kent, physically unchanged, but mentally — wholly different. Was his mind deranged? I thought so. His horrible experience had thrown his mind off its balance. I would humor him; give him something to eat; watch my chance to telephone to Dr. French or to get help. The swift thoughts made me realize that I was shudderingly afraid of Kent now. He had always had a strength twice my own.

"What are you engaged at in there? Are you ready?"

He was peering into my dark bedroom while I fumbled under my bed for my slippers.

"Yes. Yes, I'm ready, Kent. Come on."

He followed me with quiet footsteps down the upper hall. It was horrible to have him behind me. I turned and noticed that he did not glance at Anne's room as we went by her door. We passed the upper telephone extension. I wanted to stop and call Dr. French, but I did not dare. Nor did I dare arouse the house.

"This way, Kent."

He followed me down the stairs. I saw, as I turned toward the kitchen in the dim lower hallway where a single night light was burning, that Kent did not know his way to the

kitchen. How had he entered the house? The front door was locked. Then I noticed a lower hall window open wide at the bottom and his glance upon it. "Which way" he demanded softly.

"Here. Follow me."

We went through the dark dining room, which had moonlight shining through its windows; through the pantry and into the kitchen, where I switched on a small light.

"Sit down there," I told him.

"Yes, I will."

HE SLUMPED into a chair by the kitchen table, and fresh horror swept me. As I switched on the light he had almost jumped, gazing wildly around as though to avoid its glare. And as he slumped over the table I saw great beads of sweat breaking out on his face.

"Kent!"

"I — I'm all right. Will you open that window. It is close in here."

I opened a kitchen window wide from the bottom. The night air blowing in seemed to revive him.

"Where is — the food?" he gasped.

"I'll get it. You sit still. You won't move?"

"No. Bring it quickly."

I left him and went back into the pantry and stood there a moment by the icebox. The house was silent; everyone was

asleep and no one had heard us. By the clock in the hall I had seen that the time was about twelve-thirty.

What was I to do? I stood and contemplated the possibility of arousing one of the men in the house. Together we could overpower Kent, keep him from hurting either himself or us; hold him until the doctor came. They would send him to a hospital, no doubt. Was he temporarily deranged, or would it be permanent?

I must have stood there longer than I realized. His low, but vehement, voice sounded, and I heard his step.

"What are you about in there?"

I abandoned my wild plans. "Coming, Kent," I called soothingly. "You sit down. I'll bring you food at once."

I heard him go back to his seat. There was the remains of a roast chicken in the icebox, and I carried it into the kitchen.

"There you are. How's that?" I set it before him. "I'll get some bread. I could even make you a cup of coffee."

I stood with my blood chilling, gaping at him. He seized the chicken, tore at it, pulled on the meat and began stuffing it in his mouth, wolfing it down ravenously. I turned away, and with his eyes following me, I got bread.

"Water," he said. "Be more

quiet. Would you waken the household?"

I got him water. "Easy Kent. Don't eat too much. You'll make yourself sick."

I was trembling inside. It is a most horrible thing to cope with a madman. He was my best friend, yet he seemed now a stranger; more than that, an antagonist. He ate for five minutes and the chicken was demolished; the last loaf of bread was gone, and he drank all the water I would give him.

Then he sat back and suddenly smiled. "Now I feel better. Egad, I was famished."

"Of course you feel better. Shall we —"

The words died in my throat. He was eyeing me with the gaze of a stranger. I realized suddenly that he did not know me! Never once had he called me by name!

"Stop staring at me," he said, and burst into a laugh. "Egad, I have you frightened, little fellow. Well, let me ask you this: do you want to die?"

He was right when he said I was frightened. I drew back in my chair, but I could not escape his eyes, his gaze, which held me fascinated. And suddenly it seemed that his words were hardly those of a madman.

"You — you're joking, Kent."

"Perhaps you think so, my good man, but I doubt it. Let me tell you this: If you know what is best for you, you'll say

nought of meeting me tonight. Do you understand? You would do well to forget it. Kent Cavendish is dead."

I TRIED TO speak, but the words would not come. He went on softly, "I don't blame you for being frightened — gad, that's reasonable enough. But when I'm gone you must hold your tongue. That's the time to be frightened. You tell what you've seen of me tonight — and tomorrow night I'll kill you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I gasped.

He stood up. "Sit where you are. What is your name?"

"Jack Rollins. Why, Kent —"

"You mentioned a girl. Anne —"

I froze at his look.

"Was that the girl at — my funeral? The girl with you?"

I think I nodded.

"Your sister?" he persisted. "You and she were with me — when I died?"

"Kent —" I tried to steady my whirling senses. He was at the kitchen door, opening it outward. The wild thought swept me that I must stop him. For his sake I must stop him, hold him here until I could get the doctor.

"Kent!"

"Remember, keep your mouth shut about me if you value your own hide — or the girl."

He pushed the door wide. I was on my feet at last.

"Kent, wait! Let me — talk to you!"

I made a leap for him but with incredible agility he went over the threshold and banged the door in my face. I got it open only in time to see his bareheaded figure disappearing in the shadows of the garden trees.

He was gone. And in the silence of the garden, his wild eery laugh came floating back to me.

IV

"DOCTOR, LOOK here — above everything, Dr. French, this has got to be secret. He threatened me; worse, I tell you, he threatened Anne. But we've got to do something for him, roaming alone, in that condition. God knows what he might do — to himself or others."

"Tell me, carefully, Rollins, just what happened. Miss Anne, don't look so frightened, child. Surely this is better than having him dead."

"Is it?" Anne murmured. "Is it?"

"Of course it is. We'll find him, never fear, and I'll bring him around. The shock of that experience unhinged his mind. That's natural enough. A week of rest and good care will fix him."

"Of course," I agreed.

But Anne just sat staring, with a face, white as chalk,

framed by her black falling hair.

"Tell me it all," Dr. French pursued. "Carefully; exactly what happened."

I told him. I think I have never seen a man so gravely intent as he listened. He was in his middle fifties, gray-haired, smooth shaven, with a face of ruffed features; a tall, muscular fellow who had been athletic all his life. He did not once interrupt me, his intent gaze always upon my face, save that two or three times he turned to smile with a reassuring smile at Anne.

It was now about two A.M. of this same night. When Kent escaped from me, I phoned at once to Dr. French. He would have come to me, but I feared we would arouse the boarding house. He lived only a block or so away, and I told him I would bring Anne and come to him at once. A fear for Anne's safety was upon me; I did not dare leave her. I hurried upstairs, told her with a half incoherent explanation, what had occurred.

"Better, Anne — so much better than if he were dead."

I clung to that angle, enlarged upon it. Indeed, for all the horror of my midnight experience, the strange fact that Kent was alive began to bring me hope. I felt, too, that Anne had a right to know it, to share whatever hope we could get. I had complete confidence in

Anne's poise, for she was a self-reliant, purposeful girl, and mistress of herself always. We were orphans; at twenty, now, Anne had supported herself for three years. She had chosen Kent for her husband — certainly a rational choice, for in my opinion, as in hers, no finer fellow than Kent Cavendish ever lived. So now I felt she had a right to know and I told her, swiftly, but fully, everything that had happened.

By two o'clock we were dressed and in the doctor's office, and I repeated my story.

"Is that all?" he demanded when I paused.

"Yes."

He looked at Anne. "We must find him. It's just a temporary derangement."

Anne had not cried this time. With the helplessness of sitting at a dying man's bedside she had yielded to her feelings. But not now.

She said abruptly, "How do you propose to find him, Dr. French? Should we tell the police?"

We stared at each other. Was that the thing to do? Hunt Kent like a criminal? Suppose he were trapped and caught? He might kill himself before anyone could stop him. But more than that, there were things about the affair too wholly inexplicable. I met Dr. French's glance and I knew his thoughts were the same as

mine; both of us were concealing them from Anne.

"No," he said at last. "I hardly think we need do that, as yet." He stood up. He was only partly dressed, with dressing gown and slippers. "I have an idea, Rollins. I'll go get dressed. There is something we can do at once. Come up with me and we'll talk it over."

I caught his significant glance and I stood up. "You won't mind waiting here, Anne?"

"No," she said.

I SAT IN the doctor's bedroom while he hastily dressed. He was more solemn than ever.

"Can't talk before her, Rollins. I want to go out to the cemetery; that's the first thing to do. I must see Kent's grave."

"You think he might be there? That he might go back there to his grave? You think that?"

He flung me a startled glance. "Good Lord, I hadn't. But he might; he might do anything." He faced me as he drew on his shirt.

"Suppose Kent was not dead when we buried him." He lowered his voice to a furtive, vehement undertone. "Not dead — and coming to himself he rose from his grave, and now he's mentally deranged. Does that satisfy you? Does it fit the facts?"

"No," I said bluntly. "Dr. French, I don't know what to think."

The doctor smiled grimly. "We can't theorize; there's no use trying. The man you fed an hour ago looked like Kent Cavendish, but —"

"It was Kent."

"His body. His voice — you say you could recognize the tone, the timber of his voice?"

"Of course."

"But he did not talk like Kent. He did not recognize you, but that's a frequent symptom of mental illness. He did not know the way to Mrs. Green's kitchen? That would be more unusual."

The doctor stopped lacing one of his shoes and eyed me. "But he did not talk like Kent. Egad! He used that expletive. He spoke quite naturally, as you recount it, of the larder, and provisions. That's the way a normal man talked a hundred years ago, Rollins!"

I said, "You — you want to go to his grave now?"

"Rollins, we must try, God knows, to be rational. It's possible that you have mistaken someone else for Kent. An impostor, trading on the likeness — threatening you."

But I did not think so.

"If that's the case," Dr. French went on, "the grave of Kent Cavendish will be intact. I propose to find that out, if we have to dig up the body to prove it."

"And if — if —"

"If the body is gone?" He stood up, facing me. "Rollins,

has this occurred to you? Suppose we admit Kent was not dead when we buried him this afternoon. By nightfall, down there in his coffin, he recovered his senses. That's not humanly possible, because if he was breathing at all, he would speedily have used up the little air in that coffin and died of asphyxiation before he could escape. But let's assume he lived through that. He was six feet underground, Rollins! A ton of earth was on top of him!"

It brought me no light, but only a shudder. Dr. French was ready. "We'll take my car and drive there," he added grimly. "See what condition the grave is in. But your sister — we can't very well take her on such an errand."

But I did not feel in a mood to leave her out of my sight anywhere at such a time as this. Anne herself solved the problem; she stood fronting us as we returned to the office downstairs.

"Where are you going?"

When I stammered some incoherency, and Dr. French hesitated, she added quietly, "I think, Dr. French, that you don't quite understand me yet. I am a girl, but you haven't seen any hysteria, have you? I'm fairly intelligent, and I've been thinking this over just as you and Jack have."

WE STOOD speechless, gap-

ing at her. She was trying to smile and she managed a twisted little grimace — not far from tears.

"This — this thing, whatever it means," she went on, "well after all, it certainly is more to me than to either of you. To me and — Kent. Don't you think you'd better speak plainly? Don't you think I deserve it?"

Dr. French put his arm over her shoulder, but she drew away from him. "Where are you going now?"

"To the cemetery," he said. "Anne, I do understand you. Whatever we can do for Kent, you want to take your part. But just now you cannot help us."

She turned to me. "I want to go! I don't want to be alone; helpless while you try to do things for Kent. That's what I did at his bedside: I sat helpless. Don't make me do it again!"

"But the danger," I began. Dr. French had been fumbling in his desk. I saw him take an automatic and put it in his pocket. And Anne saw it.

"Dr. French, if this — this affair is dangerous enough to need that weapon," she said, smiling again, "then I don't want to be alone. Not tonight. Certainly there is less danger with you and Jack. And I'm not afraid of moonlit graves."

God knows it seemed to me she would be in less danger with us than anywhere else. "You can come," I said.

It was still not three o'clock when we left the house. His car was a roadster, and we three all sat in the single seat. He had brought a spade from the garage which he put in the car without comment. The night had cleared. There was no surface wind, but quite evidently nearly a gale at the higher altitudes, for the leaden clouds were riding the sky at a swift pace. The moon, just past the full, was well overhead, shining momentarily clear, then ducking behind the clouds so that great shadows moved in a rapid sweep across the countryside.

The drive to the cemetery took us less than fifteen minutes, along tree-lined, silent streets of the little suburb to a more lonely section. It was a fairly large cemetery. Trees lined its edge along the high wire fence. It lay, partially on a hillside, with a corner of it dipping into a hollow where a stream flowed and a melancholy cluster of willows sagged their branches into the water.

There were two gates. I recalled that Kent's grave was near the main one, near a small dirt road, and not far from the clump of willows. But Dr. French did not drive into that road; instead, he stopped and parked under a tree of the main highway.

"The car is too conspicuous," he said grimly, in answer to my

look. The moon was out, and by its light I saw him gaze intently into Anne's face as we climbed from the car and stood in the road.

"This isn't a pleasant business," he added, and he smiled at her. "I suppose I'm a fool, subjecting your nerves to this — but somehow I don't think so."

"Thank you, she murmured. I'm not nervous, Dr. French."

"I don't believe you are," he retorted. And as he moved to the car and brought out the spade I heard him add to himself, "— any more so than we are."

IT WAS SOME three or four hundred yards to the nearest corner of the the cemetery. There were no cars at this hour on the highway; no house in sight. We went on foot down the shadowed side road, and there seemed no one about.

"Quiet," Dr. French murmured. "We won't talk; just keep your eyes open."

We came to the corner of the cemetery, and moved slowly close beside its fence. The headstones gleamed pallid in the moonlight. Occasional family vaults stood like little marble boxes in rectangles of open space. Halfway up the hill slope a pretentious mausoleum reared itself grandly. The winding dirt paths between the graves lay like twisting brown ribbons.

There seemed no one, nothing, prowling in the graveyard, save ourselves. We slipped through the main gate, waiting there a moment until a cloud went over the moon. It was a fair-sized solid mass. The shadow of it swept the cemetery as though some Titan were throwing great black cloaks over the shining headstones.

In the sudden darkness, we moved rapidly along the inside of the fence, down the slope toward the willows. I carried the spade; Dr. French held his revolver. The sight of it brought me a singular feeling of dread, for it seemed, then, as we prowled that shadowed graveyard, that against any antagonist we encountered here a revolver would be wholly useless.

Abruptly Anne gave a low cry. "I see it!"

"Hush!" came the doctor's low warning. "No noise!"

Anne's words made my heart leap into my throat. But a second later, I saw that she meant Kent's grave. It was open! As we came up to it, the hole yawned black. The dirt was piled in a mound beside it, very much as it had been when our funeral cortege arrived that afternoon. And the casket was here, up on the ground surface, with its lid pried off and its interior empty.

For a moment, beside the opened grave, we stood gazing. None of us spoke. There was

nothing to say. The thing was obvious. Kent, alive or dead, had been dug up and taken from his coffin. Someone — someone very tangible — had opened the grave and lifted out the coffin.

Dr. French whispered, "One man couldn't do that, much less Kent from inside. Several men, probably, since it must have been done in a hurry during the early evening."

He checked himself abruptly. Anne's hand went to her mouth to stifle her startled cry and we all of us shrank down against the mound of earth. The moonlight had come again, and across the cemetery, half way up the hillside, the dark blobs of men's figures had suddenly appeared. Two men carried something oblong which sagged between them. They had appeared from behind the mausoleum, and were now moving away from us, toward the opposite gate.

I gripped Dr. French. "They're carrying a man!"

We could see it all now: two men in dark clothes carrying the sagging inert form of a third man between them. Could that inert form be —

Anne's horrified whisper echoed my thoughts. "Is that — is that Kent they've got?"

Dr. French swept us both behind him. "You two stay here! Rollins, hold her down behind this mound."

He leaped to his feet. His shout rang over the graveyard.

"You — over there; what are you doing?" He was running forward, but he was not so incautious as he seemed, for he came to a tree and darted behind it. "You — drop that!" His shot, high in the air, sounded like the roar of a cannon in the stillness.

The two figures dropped their burden and ran. We could see them reach the other gate and go through it; and a moment later there was the fading sound of an automobile in the distance.

Very tangible ghouls, at any rate!

The doctor was shouting, "Come on!" but we were already half way to him.

"Oh, if only it is Kent!" Anne cried,

THE MAN LAY prone in the graveyard path, face down where they had dropped him. But he was not Kent; we saw it, even before we got there. This was an older man, a large, heavy-set fellow, with a head of iron-gray hair like a mop. Dr. French turned him over; his dead, pallid face stared up at us.

"Good Lord!"

"What is it, Doctor?"

I stood gripping Anne, and we both gazed down at the doctor who was bending over the corpse.

"Why, I know this fellow," said Dr. French. "He died in the Maple Grove Hospital."

The small hospital of Maple Grove was well known to Dr. French who spent most of his mornings there. This was an Italian importer, named Torelli, who lived in Maple Grove, and had his business in New York. He spoke almost no English; he had been in this country only a few months. Dr. French had been called in consultation over his case. He was suffering from a complication of afflictions: hardened arteries, a high blood pressure and a heart whose muscle was degenerating into a fatty tissue. He had contracted a severe bronchial cold, and, in spite of medical efforts, his laboring, suddenly dilating heart had killed him. He had died three days ago and had been buried here in this cemetery a few hours before Kent. His body, now, quite evidently, had been dug up by these grave-robbers, who were making off with it when Dr. French frightened them away.

The doctor told us this with swift, brief words. The look on his face as he gazed up at us in the moonlight carried mingled wonderment and horror.

"Died, Rollins! He died — he died last Tuesday, but he — he's not dead now!"

A low groan came from the figure lying in the path. I shoved Anne away and knelt down beside the doctor.

"Not dead? But you say —"

"Hush! He's trying to speak!"

He was not dead, but evidently he was dying. His labored breath seemed to be choking him, but he was trying to speak, and, as we bent lower, we heard his words.

"What — a — damn — fool!"

"English!" gasped the doctor. Good God, it's English!"

It came again, in clear English, with no hint of Italian accent. "What a fool I was!"

Dr. French seized him. "Torelli! What happened to you? Tell us what happened?"

But the dying man did not heed us. He coughed weakly, horribly, and went on, "What a fool! This damned body. It's no good! I say, it's no good!"

He mouthed and choked on the words. All his breath went out with a labored gasp, but he recovered it. He seemed imbued with a last frenzied strength, panting, struggling, twitching at our feet. His groans were ghastly.

"Oh, this damned body! Let me out. Let me out."

Then suddenly he stiffened, lay motionless with sagging jaw, his bulging eyes staring at the stars.

He was dead. Dr. French had seen him die last Tuesday; we saw him die now.

V

WE HAD THOUGHT to keep the affair secret, but it was impossible. We took Torelli's

body back with us in our car and delivered it to the hospital. Dr. French consulted with his brother physicians. They decided not to bury the body again for a time, but to keep it under guard, watched constantly day and night.

How impossible to keep such events from becoming known! We had to notify the cemetery officials that we found the grave of Torelli open and the empty coffin lying nearby. A guard was placed in the cemetery — armed men creeping in there each night after dark.

And we had to notify the police. It had seemed at first to Dr. French and me, that only Kent was involved in the inexplicable affair. But now it had spread to others. Besides Torelli, there was the case of the young man in the neighboring town. His name was Foley. He still lingered in a coma, his dying condition very much as Kent's had been.

A widespread search was instigated by the police, and suspicious characters were rounded up and questioned. The news of all this spread like fire in prairie grass. Internes whispered to nurses, who went home and whispered to their families. Police guards speculating on why they were guarding the cemetery, tried to piece together what they had been told, and invented more. The men who were questioned by the police,

and released, since nothing could be found against them, went back to their friends with wild tales.

Terror lay on Maple Grove and all its neighboring communities within a day. The thing was garbled, and fantastic, gruesome, inexplicable as the events had been, the whispered spreading of them enlarged the horror to diabolical proportions. It was a thing to be whispered on shadowed street corners, or in darkened rooms at home. Theory, conjecture was futile — yet everyone theorized with fancy stimulated into wild flights.

WITHIN A DAY or so, the public was creating the terror upon which it fed. The police, hospital and cemetery authorities were deluged with reports of supernatural happenings. People heard creaks and raps in the walls of their rooms. The sound of groans woke nervous women up at night; young girls could not sleep for the fancied hearing of prowling footsteps, or the feel of men's eyes peering at them through their windows. Sick people — and more especially those who chanced to have trivial, temporary ailments — went into a panic of hysterical apprehension.

In the midst of it, harassed police officials could find nothing tangible to attack. Habitual offenders of the criminal world

were questioned and in ten minutes were obviously as mystified as the men who questioned them. The hills and woods of the neighborhood were searched for Kent, but to no avail.

It was all so intangible. What had happened to me hardly deserved credibility; it could all have been a figment of my fancy. The second death of Torelli, witnessed only by Dr. French, Anne and myself, was scoffed at by the police. Yet two graves in the Maple Grove cemetery had been opened, and two corpses were removed. That was tangible, not to be denied. More than that, it was presently discovered that several of the more pretentious vaults had been rifled of corpses recently interred. Nor had the affair begun with Kent Cavendish, for we learned now that a cemetery twenty miles distant had had several vaults opened the day before Kent was buried.

And there were other solid facts. An automobile was found abandoned some two miles down that back road beyond the Maple Grove Cemetery. It had been stolen from a nearby private garage. Quite evidently it was the car in which the two grave-robbers had escaped when they dropped Torelli's body at Dr. French's shot. Several seemingly authentic reports were made of local burglaries. A private home was entered by night,

thieves plundering the kitchen and pantry of its food. Two vacant furnished homes where the families had left for the summer were burglarized. These were in different, nearby towns; neither was in Maple Grove. In both cases, the things stolen were men's clothes and blankets. And then, by night, a small grocery-store in an isolated, lonely neighborhood, was broken into and a considerable quantity of food was taken.

Strange facts upon which anyone might build wild theories! During those next few days, I was admitted several times into the conferences of Dr. French and his fellow scientists. How could science cope with a thing like this! The elderly Dr. Gregg, at this time one of America's greatest psychiatrists, had come from New York. All his life he had delved into those mysterious disorders of the human nerves and mind which so closely approach the supernatural that no one can say where medical science ends and occultism begins. Anne and I told Dr. Gregg all we could. He was a very kindly old fellow, his face thin and lined, and crowned by snow-white hair, thick and waving for all his seventy years. His pale-blue, gentle eyes were at once penetrating and questing.

I RECALL A conference in which the local police chief en-

deavored to reduce all the inexplicable happenings to the criminal formula with which he was familiar: men robbing graves and homes and grocery stores for gainful purpose — lawbreakers who would soon be arrested, tried and convicted.

"All the rest — this ghost stuff," he said grimly, "is the bunk. Imagination. Hysteria. I don't say that you, Rollins, or your sister, are liars. You, Dr. French — I don't doubt your veracity in the least. But I think there has been some error. Nobody can die twice. It's not reasonable."

"I agree with you," admitted Dr. French quietly. "It's not reasonable, but it's true."

"Maybe it is, maybe not. What you gentlemen are doing, I think, is interpreting things wrong. This is a gang of crooks, undoubtedly, up to something — though what, I'm blessed if I can figure out. But we'll round 'em up." He smiled at Dr. Gregg. "I've heard of you a good part of my life, Doctor, and I've got a great respect for you. But I never knew a scientific man would fall for ghost stuff."

"What is known as the supernatural," Dr. Gregg said quietly, "may very readily be wholly scientific, once we understand the natural laws governing it. That's what you do not appreciate, Captain Walsh. A great deal of today's science would have been supernatural to the

people of a hundred years ago. A radio, for instance —" He checked himself, and added, "This is no time for an academic argument. Captain, you are accustomed to making deductions by piecing known facts together. Have you done much of that in this case?"

"Why —"

"Let me summarize facts. Ten graves in this neighborhood have been robbed and the corpses gone. All in the past week. You say a gang of crooks did it. Why would they do it,"

"That," said the Police Chief, "is what I'm damned if I can figure out."

"No known motive, you'd call that, wouldn't you. Very well. Ten corpses have vanished. Now I'll ask you, have any crooks been seen engaged in any of these criminal activities of the past week?"

"Dr. French saw two in —"

"The two who were carrying Torelli's body? He was not near enough to see them, save that they seemed to be human forms —"

"Men who dropped the corpse and ran," Captain Walsh interrupted. "And they had stolen a car. They escaped in it and abandoned it. That seems pretty much like a regular crook to me. What are you getting at, Dr. Gregg?"

"You will understand in a moment. No so-called regular criminal has been identified as

connected with this so far. But two of the ten corpses have been seen and identified. Kent Cavendish, after he was buried, was seen, recognized, and talked with. And so was Torelli."

GREGG DREW a slip of paper from his pocket. "Here is a notation of the deaths of those ten men whose bodies vanished from their graves. It shows, let me say, the physical condition of the vital organs of those bodies. All died of illnesses in which one or more of the vital organs were more or less impaired. All except Kent Cavendish. He was, if you can imagine the anomaly, in good physical condition when he died."

The Chief of Police mopped his face. "What are you getting at?"

"Do you follow me? Torelli's body was in bad shape. Two — suppose we call them friends — helped his body out of its grave. It lived for a brief time. It talked, not like Torelli, but like *someone else*, using a totally different language. That *someone else* did not like the body. It said so plainly. The body was not in a condition to live. The lungs and the bronchial passages were horribly clogged. The heart was badly dilated. The mechanism worked for a moment, and then stopped again. But Kent Cavendish is different. His body is strong and well; there is nothing to pre-

vent his being perfectly active!"

The little hospital office was silent for a moment. Then Captain Walsh stammered,

"I hear what you say, Dr. Gregg, but —"

"It seems pretty obvious, Captain; it is the only hypothesis into which the facts all fit. The first graves which were opened were vaults, out of which a reanimated corpse might escape of itself. The corpses did escape that way and helped the others out of their graves. Some alien spirit is animating Kent's body. It watched his death, and thus it knew which bedroom was his. It watched his funeral and hovered over his grave, waiting for the other cadavers to open that grave so that it could possess the body of Kent.

"The burglaries, you said, were not skilfully done. Nothing was stolen but clothes for men, and food, blankets and such things. Why? Because these robbers are only trying to maintain existence, Captain Walsh! Hiding somewhere and needing the necessities of life. Not a band of crooks, Captain. We're not dealing with crooks, but with the corpses themselves!"

VI

WHATEVER THE nature of these mysterious depredations, they seemed now to have ceased momentarily. Three days had

passed since Kent's burial; and from that moment when he had leaped from the kitchen doorway of Mrs. Green's boarding house and disappeared across the garden we had had no sign of his existence, living or dead.

Beyond the possibility of finding Kent, our interest now centered in the young man, Foley, who, in the neighboring village, still lingered at the point of death. He was in a trance-like coma and slowly sinking, but as yet his spirit clung, reluctant to leave.

During those three days, we were constantly apprehensive of some new, weird happening. And the nights! They were, indeed, horrible nights for Anne and me. Of all menace, that which we call the supernatural can be most fearsome. I had never thought it before, but I knew it now. It was for Anne I most feared. I could not forget Kent's threats if I told of his midnight visit. I had told, and I felt that by now he must know it. And I recalled with a shudder, his strange look, when, in his bedroom, I had mentioned Anne; and how, later, downstairs in the kitchen, he had questioned me about her, and had specifically threatened her.

We were taking precautions. Both Anne and I had changed our bedrooms from the second to the third floor of Mrs. Green's house. Anne stayed secluded, never going outdoors; and after

dark each night one of Captain Walsh's men, in plain clothes, arrived at Mrs. Green's and spent the night in the second floor hallway outside the door of the room Anne had previously occupied. All the rooms there were vacant now; most of Mrs. Green's boarders had precipitously fled.

With the instincts of a trained detective, Captain Walsh felt that our best chance of capturing Kent was through Anne, by using her as a lure. In this, both Dr. Gregg and Dr. French concurred. Anne herself was eagerly willing; and though it was against my every instinct, I had no course but to agree.

Every precaution was taken to avoid danger. But in the daytime, and once or twice at night, we showed Anne briefly at the house windows. And we kept a dim light in her room and made moving shadows of her upon the drawn blind, so that if Kent were lurking within sight, he would know she was here. And we left the front door of the house and one of the lower windows generally open.

Would he come? He did not, the first night. Nor the second. The third night, near midnight, Dr. French and I, armed with police automatics, were seated in one of the darkened lower rooms of the house. Anne was in her third floor bedroom; the plainclothesman was on guard

at the head of the stairway on the second floor.

We heard a tread on the steps of the front veranda. Was it Kent, coming at last? The front door was closed, but not locked. From where we sat, we could see that door, with the dim entryway light casting a yellow glow upon it. The footsteps crossed the front porch, but the door did not open. There was a moment of silence when the footsteps ceased; and then the front doorbell rang — a single, brief ring.

We were on our feet. "I'll go," I whispered; and Dr. French nodded and drew back out of sight.

WAS IT KENT, coming now openly? My hand went into the side pocket of my jacket and gripped the gun. When I got out in the hall I saw Walsh's man at the head of the stairs; he nodded at me and drew back, watching, alert, weapon in hand.

Again, as that night in the graveyard, I had the queer feeling that we were fatuous with these weapons. Perhaps I did not show it, but I think I had never been so frightened as in that moment when I crossed the lower hall, came to the front door and opened it.

It was not Kent! A man stood on the shadowed veranda; a smallish fellow in dark clothes and a gray felt hat with its brim

pulled down half across his white face. As I appeared in the opening doorway, he seized that hat and removed it.

"Is this Mrs. Green's house?"

His voice was low, smooth and refined.

"Yes," I said. "What do you want?"

"I would like to see Mr. Rollins. Jack Rollins."

"I am Jack Rollins."

I was sure I had never seen this young fellow before. He took a step toward me.

"May I come in? Look here, I want to talk to you." He seemed afraid that I would bar him. He added, with lowered, furtive voice, "It's about this Kent Cavendish affair. I think I can give you some information. I didn't want to give it to the police."

My heart was pounding in my throat so that it seemed to smother me. The visitor's gaze was past my shoulder, searching the hall behind me. I stepped aside.

"Come in."

"Thank you."

He entered and I closed the door.

"Come with me."

I led him to the darkened room off the hall where Dr. French was waiting. Walsh's man was not visible at the top of the stairs.

"Oh, Dr. French — a visitor for us."

The fellow started, as a light

flashed on in the room we were approaching, disclosing the doctor at its threshold.

I repeated as casually as I could, "A visitor. This is Dr. French, Mr. —"

"My name is George Francis Bacon."

The name burst impulsively from him. I got the impression that he was alarmed at having given it.

"This is Dr. French," I said. "Come in and sit down, please."

He hesitated, took a backward step; then, perhaps because he realized his name meant nothing to us, he entered the room and sat down a little awkwardly on a chair, with the doctor and me facing him. There was a brief pause, during which Dr. French eyed our visitor and then turned inquiringly to me.

I said, "I've never met you before, Mr. Bacon?"

"No. But I've heard of you, Jack Rollins. I can't — I'm afraid I can't speak plainly. Look here, you'll just have to trust me."

He sat with his hat in hand, fronting us. He had sleek, jet black, oily looking hair, and dark, luminous eyes. The room-light, though fairly dim, nevertheless struck him full, leaving the doctor and me partly in shadow.

"What is it you have to say?" I demanded.

AGAIN HE hesitated. He shifted uneasily in his chair, and his gaze instead of being on me, was roving the room.

"I'm not sure —" He stopped, vaguely, and began again. "I'm not sure I have anything —"

"You mentioned Kent Cavendish, Mr. Bacon."

I flung Dr. French a significant glance as I said it; but he was regarding our visitor intently.

"Yes — Kent Cavendish. A friend of mine in England some years ago. I am from London, Mr. Rollins."

He did indeed talk with an unmistakable British accent.

"Yes?" I said. "Well, this is — this was Kent's physician."

"What do you know of Kent Cavendish?" Dr. French demanded abruptly.

The young fellow started. His face, here in the light showed extraordinarily pale and thin. There were beads of sweat on it. He was hitching his chair and suddenly I realized that he was trying to avoid the light.

"I — why — why, I have heard —" He seemed to force his gaze to meet the doctor's. "I have heard very strange things. I don't believe them, of course, no one believes them. I met — met Kent —"

He stopped and went into a sudden fit of coughing, which seemed to leave him exhausted.

"You're ill, aren't you?" said Dr. French.

"Yes, I — I'm not very well." Our visitor's breathing seemed labored, and he spoke faintly.

"And about Cavendish," the doctor pursued. "You were saying —"

"I met Kent in New York about a week before he — he died. He told me there was a girl. A girl he loved. Anne Rollins."

I tensed. And I felt the doctor's gaze which seemed warning me not to speak.

"Anne Rollins?" Dr. French prompted.

"Yes. He told me about her. She — is she here — here now?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "She is here. What about her?"

"Here? In her room upstairs? But you have her guarded, haven't you?"

He was facing the hall door; his wandering gaze seemed searching. I realized with a shock that he was giving us no information. The reverse — he was questioning us!

"Guarded?" said Dr. French, with simulated surprise. "Guarded? Oh, no! Why should she be guarded? Is there danger?"

Instead of answering, the fellow again was seized with a fit of coughing. The sweat stood in great beads on his pallid forehead. And as gazed at him I was abruptly aware of an indefinable quality of strangeness in his aspect. His clothes, of good cut and texture, did not seem to fit him. They were too

large, as though perhaps a severe illness had recently made him much thinner than when he last wore them. He held his feet partly back under his chair. But I saw that the shoes he wore were not mates — one was tan and one black. More than that, there was about him an indefinable aspect of unreality. Something frightening to contemplate; so frightening that though the thought leaped at me, I shudderingly thrust it away.

His coughing this time seemed nearly to strangle him, but he recovered himself and stood waveringly on his feet. He was horribly thin and wasted; ravaged by illness.

"I'll go now," he gasped. "I — thank you."

We stood up with him. My hand was already in the side pocket of my jacket, gripping the automatic. I had no idea but that Dr. French would detain this fellow. But the doctor flung me a warning glance.

"Good night, Mr. Bacon."

I stood reluctantly aside. This visitor had told us nothing; had given not the least excuse for coming here. Had asked us if Anne were here — if Anne were guarded! And now, without questioning him at all, Dr. French was letting him go!

"Jack, I'll show Mr. Bacon out."

I STOOD watching them

cross the lower hall. It may have been a trick of my imagination, and no doubt it was. Dr. French was smoking one of his habitual cigarettes. The rising smoke hung above him as he paused at the hall door. For an instant there was a spiral of smoke. I seemed to see that it had a form — a form melting, half materializing — a presence, hovering over the doctor and the departing visitor.

The opening front door swirled the smoke away in a draft of incoming air. I breathed again. What nonsense that I had thought I saw anything else!

"Good night, Mr. Bacon."

"Good night, Doctor."

The front door closed. Our visitor was gone. His step on the porch sounded hurried, as though he had crossed at a run.

The doctor came back to me. "Well, Rollins, what did you make of it?"

Had I seen something in the smoke? I saw nothing now, but I sensed something — a presence here with us in the room.

I could see that it had affected Dr. French. His jaw dropped. For a brief instant we stared at each other, stricken. Something was here with us, something tortured, harassed, wanting to impress itself upon us. Wanting to communicate? Strangely, I was not frightened. It seemed that I, too, was trying to communicate: striving to listen, not with my ears, but

with my inner consciousness to what *something* wanted me to know. *Something* friendly, so that I was not frightened, but eager.

THE FEELING was abruptly gone, as though a spell had broken. Failure! And simultaneously Dr. French felt the same. We had for that instant been standing transfixed.

He stirred with a jerk. "Good Lord, what was that?"

"You felt it too? But, Doctor —"

"Gone now."

"Yes — gone." And then I added, "Dr. French, that visitor — don't let him go! Don't! There's still time. Shall I chase after him?"

I would have started rushing toward the door. A frenzied eagerness was on me, and a horrible fear that the visitor would escape us.

"Let me go, Doctor!" The doctor was gripping me. "Let me go!"

"No! Rollins, sit down! You're excited. You don't understand!"

He forced me to a chair. He stood before me. "That young fellow — what did he call himself — George Bacon? He came here to find out if Anne was here — and if we have her guarded. Don't you understand?"

I had never heard Dr. French so vehement. "He came, un-

doubtedly, from Kent Cavenish. He was sent here by Kent. Don't you understand? We're trying to lure Kent here and seize him. We're using Anne as a lure, so why should we trap this messenger? Let him go back to Kent, and say that the girl is here, and not guarded. Perhaps Kent will come next. That's what we want most, isn't it?"

"But —" I stammered, "but who —"

"George Bacon? I don't know. Do you? Did Kent ever speak of him — a friend back in England?"

"No. I don't think so."

The doctor eyed me. "George Bacon was not the name of any one of the ten corpses which have vanished; our antagonists — call them that, Rollins. No one of them was named Bacon. But the body of this visitor is described on my list! Didn't you think he looked like a slim young Spaniard, with that pale face, dark eyes and sleek black hair? He *was* a Spaniard, Juan Fernando; if he had lived he would have been in very much the physical condition of our visitor. But —"

My head was whirling with it. This thing was too strange!

"But he did not live, Rollins! He died — a week ago. And the night Kent's body vanished, so did his — until now!"

THERE WAS A sound in the

hall behind us. Anne was out there, with Walsh's man who had followed her down. She came, white-faced and trembling.

"Jack! Dr. French! You had a visitor? Not — not Kent?"

"No," said the doctor. "Not Kent. Nothing important. You —"

"I could not sleep." She had on my voluminous dressing gown which hung to her slippered bare feet. The black braids of her hair lay over her shoulders. "I could not sleep, and when I heard the doorbell, I came down and joined McGuire, but he would not let me see who it was with you. And then — just a moment ago, Doctor, I had the strangest feeling. As though Kent were here with me!"

Kent! That was it! I knew it now! The presence of Kent had been here, harassed, troubled because we let his visitor escape!

"The old, dear Kent," Anne was saying. "It seemed as though he wanted to tell me something."

Dr. French seized her by the shoulders. "We felt it, too!" he cried. "It was Kent. The personality of Kent — his spirit, call it what you will! All of him, except his body. He wanted us to capture this visitor? I didn't know it then, but I know it now!"

Anne stared, trembling. "That was it! That was it!"

"Anne, listen to me." The

doctor still held her. "Think carefully. Did you ever hear the name — did Kent ever mention the name George Bacon?"

"Why, of course!" she cried. "Kent knew him back in England years ago. They were schoolboys together."

"What did he look like, did Kent ever say?"

"Why, yes. A big blond fellow who was always taller than Kent. They had a fight in school. George Bacon was Kent's worst boyhood enemy. He stole money and blamed it on Kent."

"And what became of him? Think carefully. Did Kent ever say?"

I held my breath.

"Why — why, yes," Anne stammered. "Years ago, when they were both still in school, George Bacon was killed in a motor accident near London!"

VII

WE STOOD GAPING at Anne, Dr. French gripping her shoulders; and I sat beside them, Walsh's man, McGuire, at the threshold. Suddenly the hall telephone, whose bell we had muffled, rang softly.

McGuire came back from answering it.

"Dr. Gregg. He's at Summit Hill. Something about that young feller, Foley. He died a while ago."

Foley dead. The young man, ten miles from here, who had

been lingering in a coma like Kent's.

Dr. French went to the telephone. We gathered around him; in the silence we could hear the tiny voice of Dr. Gregg.

"You, French?"

"Yes."

"Foley died this evening. We've been watching the body; dead as a herring, no question of that. I mean, it *was* dead, French! Rigor mortis setting in normally. But there's something going on here now, French. I thought you'd come over."

"Something —"

"Don't argue, man, come! My nerves are ragged, I tell you. I'm in no mood to stand here and talk. Will you come?"

"Yes, of course I —"

"Come and bring that young woman, Anne Rollins. We need her — and her brother; but the girl especially. There's something damned queer about this, French." The old psychiatrist's voice was both vehement and trembling. "Something too queer for me. You bring the girl at once, will you?"

"Yes, of — of course," stammered the doctor.

"In your car?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll expect you in twenty minutes. Hurry, French. It may occur again at any time, and we need the girl." We heard the click as he disconnected.

Dr. French turned to Anne and me. "He said — he said —"

"We heard it," Anne interrupted. "He wants me. Something I can do to help."

VERY STRANGELY, of the three of us, Anne was the most calm. Anne, by nature, had always been self-reliant, free from hysteria. But even so, it seemed now as though her love for Kent brought only calmness where even Dr. French was visibly shaken.

"I heard him," she repeated. "There must be something I can do. Jack, don't look at me like that! Of course I'm going."

With every instinct to spare her fresh horrors, I think I would have refused, but she and Dr. French both overrode me, and I yielded. Anne took only a few moments to dress. We left McGuire on guard in Mrs. Green's and in fifteen minutes we were speeding into the dark outskirts of Summit Hill. The hospital stood near the edge of the village — a long, low, rambling building of two stories. It was about one in the morning when we got there. We found Dr. Gregg, with two of the hospital physicians in an operating room on the ground floor.

"Come in, French." He nodded to Anne and me. "Miss Blakel!" A nurse appeared from a shadowed corner of the room. She was a capable looking, middle-aged woman, and her face was nearly as white as her stiffly starched, linen uniform.

"Miss Blake, you sit here with Miss Rollins."

He spoke in a swift hurried undertone, and, after introducing us to the two local physicians, he waved us to seats.

"I'll explain presently, Dr. French. Sit quiet, all of you. Close that door again, will you, Dr. May?" His manner was businesslike.

It was a small, white room; the corpse of Foley lay on its back on a low wheeled table. The body was garbed in pajamas, with a sheet half covering it; the pallid face, with opened eyes and sagging jaw had an operating light full upon it from overhead. The light was shaded, so that the body and the small wheeled stretcher lay full within its circle, but all the rest of the room was in shadow.

My gaze had seen the outer door through which we had entered and which had just been closed by Dr. May; and the two windows with drawn blinds. There was one other door partly opened into a smaller adjoining room. Miss Blake had been in there with another nurse when Dr. Gregg called her to come and sit with Anne, and the other nurse was still there. I was with the four physicians, seated near a corner of the room, and, a little apart from us, Miss Blake sat with her arm comfortably around the tense, white-faced Anne.

The body lay near the center

of the room, within a few feet of us all. My gaze clung to it. Foley had been a young fellow in his middle twenties — a tall, lanky Irish-American lad, with an uplifted nose and a shock of unruly red hair. His body was not wasted; he seemed lying here asleep, save for the bloodless face, the staring blue eyes and that horrible sagging jaw.

Dr. Gregg was saying, "He died about nine o'clock tonight. We've been watching the body like this ever since — Dr. May, for God's sake, fix that jaw."

The younger physician rose again and with the heel of his hand pushed closed the sagging lower jaw, holding it a moment until it stayed closed.

Dr. Gregg nodded. "Thanks. Gives me the creeps, that damned thing.

THERE WAS another silence as Dr. May resumed his seat. Was this what we had been sent for, to sit and watch a corpse? Why did they want Anne?

Again Dr. Gregg's hushed undertone broke the silence. "We think it will happen again — what's happened twice already. Rather than tell you, we'll wait. You'll have an open mind to form your own conclusions. That, by heavens, is what I want: some light on this if you've got any to give us. Miss Anne, are you too frightened?"

"N-no," she said haltingly.

"Don't be. Keep your wits. I will tell you this: Something was going on here in this room an hour ago. It may begin again any minute. Within this room — or within that body. Something; some struggle. We all felt it. You, Miss Anne, perhaps you, more than any of us, will be aware of it and understand it. Will you try?"

"Yes. Yes, I will try." She huddled against the buxom nurse.

Once more the heavy silence gathered upon us. I sat hunched on my small white iron chair, staring at Foley's body. How much time passed I do not know. Ten minutes at least. A tense silence was upon us all; the operating light glared down on the corpse, and the room shadows seemed to creep closer upon us.

Ten minutes. It may have been more. I was suddenly aware of a change in the room. There was nothing visible; nothing audible; no difference perceptible to any of my human senses. Yet I was aware of the difference. There had been a tense, but quiet, silence, but now the room was filled with an unseen, inaudible turmoil. I felt it first with a vague uneasiness: a disturbance pressing upon me so that all my nerves were tingling. My skin moistened all over me with the coming of a cold sweat.

Even the corpse was different! It was motionless as before, yet different in some indefinable way. It seemed not quiescent now. Quivering, perhaps? Abruptly I realized that it *was* quivering; a tiny tremor was running over it so that I saw the hanging folds of the sheet — magnifying the motion — quite visibly trembling!

I stirred suddenly in my chair. Several of the other men shifted their feet. Anne gave a low cry, which was quickly suppressed by a warning whisper from the nurse.

Dr. Gregg's low voice sounded. "It's beginning again. Watch closely! Miss Blake, take the girl forward if it tries to speak!"

What were they going to do with Anne? I was on my feet. "Dr. Gregg —"

"Be quiet, you fool!" Dr. French was pulling at me.

"But I won't let you —"

"Be quiet," Dr. Gregg repeated vehemently. "Your sister won't be harmed."

I relaxed in my chair, still gripped by Dr. French.

A STRUGGLE was going on here! It seemed as though imponderable things were surging about the shadowed room. The body presently was quivering from one end of it to the other, and then twitching. It was a soundless struggle: we could see and hear and feel nothing save the *effect* of it.

Then I knew that the struggle was no longer about the room, but wholly within the corpse: a concentration of turmoil, a concentrated strife. The corpse twitched more forcibly. A knee came jerking up and went down again. The sheet slipped off sideways and fell to the floor with a faint swish. The visible white movement of it as it fell and the audible swish shocked my senses, as though, striving to see the invisible and to hear the inaudible this shock of reality was too great to bear.

The corpse of Foley was not dead! It *had* been dead — three doctors testified to that — but it was dead no longer. Was this Foley, coming to life before my eyes?

No! A reanimation. Movement, physical life was coming to this body which had been Foley! But the animating force was something — someone different. I did not know it then, but I was made aware of it in a moment. The jaw sagged open, then closed with a click. The eyes rolled. A tinge of color was in the livid cheeks.

Again Dr. Gregg's voice sounded. "One of them has possession of this empty shell.

"It's going to speak!" came Dr. Gregg's swift undertone. "Miss Blake —"

THE ROLLING eyes halted. There was light in them now; I

could not mistake it. Something was in possession now, gazing out at us through these windows which had belonged to Foley. I shrank back as the tortured, confused, questioning gaze seemed to rest upon me. And the lips were quivering, moving, trying to form words with a breath that was too faint.

The questioning gaze passed on. It came to Anne, and halted again. At this point the lips parted.

In the tense strained silence of the room, a low moan came from those blue-white parted lips. The chest heaved with a struggle for more air.

There was another moan, and then very faint words, "Anne. Why — Anne — you"

It had spoken to Anne! It recognized her!

The nurse was on her feet holding, lifting Anne up. I was conscious of Dr. French's warning grasp upon my arm.

The faint words came again: "You — why, Anne — Come, let me tell —"

Dr. Gregg whispered, "Quickly, Miss Blake. It called for Anne an hour ago. Quickly now."

Anne pushed the nurse away and advanced to the body. "I'm here. This is Anne. Who — who are you?"

One of the hands tried to come up to touch her, but did not have the strength.

"Anne, dear. Anne, dear, this is —"

She bent a little lower. "Are you — Kent?" she murmured. "Tell me, dear — are you Kent?"

Kent! Kent Cavendish? Not the body of Kent, which was abroad; no, it was not that. This then must be the real Kent, bodiless hovering over us back there at Mrs. Green's; hovering here a moment ago and struggling with something — someone else — for this vacant shell.

Anne was murmuring, "Are you Kent?"

"Yes! Kent! I want to — want to tell you something, Anne. This — diabolical —"

The faint words died away. Then began again. "Anne, bend closer. I can't talk so loud. I'm — going. This other one is too strong for me. Oh-h!"

It ended with a groan of anguish, and then came the words, "Closer, Anne."

She bent lower. I could see the moving lips against her ear, telling her something. And then I heard the anguished words, "Anne, goodbye dear —"

It seemed that the body of Foley seized Anne. A caress? An anguished embrace? I shook off Dr. French's grip — or he released me. We were all on our feet, but at once, Anne was safely loose. The arms fell away from her; and a convulsion jerked at the limbs. Then the

body stiffened, and was once more a corpse.

I heard myself shouting, "Anne, come away! Annel!"

Miss Blake, the nurse, was with me as I leaped forward. Anne was standing erect, but she was wavering. Her knees gave way, and she sank into an inert heap at our feet.

VIII

"IT'S NOT serious." Dr. French looked up at us as we crowded around him where he kneeled over Anne's body. "She's only fainted. Coming around all right. Move back."

Heaven knows, she had the provocation to faint. I lifted her up and carried her, at Dr. Gregg's command, into the adjoining room, at the door of which the other nurse met us. There was a couch in there; I laid Anne gently on it. Dr. Gregg was roaring demands to the nurses for restoratives. But they were unnecessary; Anne was already reviving. She waved Miss Blake away.

"I'm — all right, thank you. All right now."

I sat for a moment beside her. Dr. French leaned down at my shoulder, and whispered, "I wouldn't question her now. Presently."

"Yes." I nodded.

She had closed her eyes; she was relaxed and exhausted.

Miss Blake stood bathing her forehead.

"Jack, dear, I'm all right."

I stooped and kissed her.

"Yes, Anne. Of course you are."

"He said — did you know that it was Kent who spoke to me? He said —"

"Not just now, Anne. Wait a few moments until you're stronger."

She sighed and closed her eyes again.

Dr. French motioned me away, and sat beside Anne. She opened her eyes and smiled. "I'm all right, Doctor," she said, "Don't be worried. I — I'm just tired."

"I think we should let her rest," Dr. French said softly. "Miss Blake, you and Miss Cory sit with her."

At the door to the operating room one of the other physicians called softly, "Dr. French, come!"

Dr. French drew me with him. We left Anne lying resting, recovering, with the two nurses close beside her.

"Dr. French, come quickly!"

WE GOT BACK into the operating room, and I saw that Dr. Gregg and the other two physicians were watching the body of Foley which was again twitching! We stood now, close around it, with the light beating down on us all.

Dr. Gregg swung on us. "Close that door! The girl has had enough of this."

I closed the connecting door upon Anne and the two nurses, and turned back to the operating table where I stood, like the physicians, peering, watching, tense, trying to fathom the eerie, invisible drama taking place within the body which had been Foley. The twitching of the muscles had abruptly stopped. The long, lanky frame, clad in the blue-white cotton pajamas, lay quiescent. The eyes now were closed; the jaw was tightly closed, but the lips were slightly parted. It was, indeed, a grim face. The skin, once waxen with the pallor of death, was faintly flushed. The blue-white lips, as I stared, were visibly reddening. Then I saw that the chest was stirring with a gentle rhythmic respiration!

This was no turmoil now; no strife. The body of Foley might have been asleep, and visibly gaining strength. This was a complete reanimation. Was it still the identity of Kent, habiting this body now? I prayed so, but a premonition told me no. I recalled the words: *This other one is too strong for me.*

Dr. Gregg was murmuring: "This seems permanent, almost like normal strength. Let the strength come fully. Then we'll wake him up."

Dr. French had his stethoscope in hand. "Try it," Dr. Gregg added. "There will be a normal beat, presently, I'll wager. Look at those lips and the

color in the ears. Feel the pulse. This time we'll have someone trapped! There'll be no escape when full possession is taken. And it's being taken, gentlemen!"

A telephone buzzer sounded softly from an instrument in the room corner. A microscopic voice of the hospital operator outside, said, "Can Dr. Gregg take a call? It seems important. It's from Police Captain Walsh."

In the silence of the room we could all hear the voice of Captain Walsh as Dr. Gregg talked with him.

"Dr. Gregg, this is Walsh. I thought you'd want to know at once. We got one of 'em! We did — an hour ago. One of my men shot him. Shot it, and killed it."

"Shot what?" Dr. Gregg demanded.

"One of the corpses. One of the men. Hell, I don't know what to call it. One of them on the list; the ones who died and were dug up and vanished. This was that young Spaniard — Juan Fernando."

My heart leaped into my throat. Not much more than an hour ago the reanimated body of Juan Fernando which called itself George Francis Bacon had called upon us.

Captain Walsh's voice was saying: "My man O'Flaherty spotted the fellow slinking along the road not far from Mrs. Green's boarding house. O'Fla-

herty bumped right into him and recognized him at once. Fernando — the corpse, whatever you call it — grabbed him like a maniac. Hell! O'Flaherty shot it. Brought the Spaniard down, dead as any corpse ever was. What'll we do with the body, Dr. Gregg? I've got it here."

"Keep it there. We'll come and see it later tonight, Captain."

"O.K. I'll keep watch of it. If it stays dead — Lord, it ought to; O'Flaherty's bullet went through the brain."

They presently disconnected. Dr. Gregg turned back to us.

"You heard? Got one of them. But the body's ruined — permanently dead, undoubtedly."

An hour ago that body had contained an identity — something calling itself George Francis Bacon. Dr. French hurriedly whispered to the physicians.

THE CORPSE OF Foley before us still lay quiescent under the light. But life was within it; there was no doubt of that. The heart and respiration were fairly normal now. Color was in the cheeks and lips. It seemed resting, gathering its strength.

Time passed; five or ten minutes. We had taken our seats again. The physicians occasionally were whispering together. The eyes of the body were still normally closed. Abruptly I seemed to see that the lids were not wholly down, but partially

raised, and, as I watched, I saw them tremble slightly. It seemed as though this *person* lying here were not asleep, but wide awake; simulating sleep, but nevertheless fully conscious, watching us furtively through narrowed slits beneath its apparently closed eyes!

Was it Kent? I knew it was not; Kent would not lie furtively quiescent like this.

I murmured, "Dr. Gregg!"

But the old physician had seen what I had seen, and he, too, had a feeling that it was not Kent.

He sprang to his feet. "Hah! Not asleep! You think you can fool us, but we've got you now!"

The pajama-clad body, this unknown person, started involuntarily at the words, and the eyes opened. He knew he was discovered. His eyes stayed open, defiantly staring at us as we crowded forward. He was a stranger here, staring at us. But he did not move, save that his dangling arm, the pulse of which Dr. French had felt a few moments ago, came up with a swift movement and rested at his side.

"Speak!" rasped Dr. Gregg. "We've got you! A strong healthy body you secured this time, didn't you? A body worth striving for. Well, you've got it."

There was no answer; just that stare of defiance; and the parted lips, through which his breath was now coming visibly

faster, drew into the suggestion of a sneer.

Dr. May exclaimed, "We've got him, whoever he is! Not Cavendish, obviously. We've got him, and he can't withdraw; not when he's established like this."

"Speak!" rasped Dr. Gregg again. "You won't? You're a fool! We've got you in there and you're going to speak! You're going to tell us all about this diabolical thing. You understand? Tell us! Answer our questions!"

There was still no answer, and the defiant eyes roved over us. Then they roved the room. He knew he was trapped, and all his muscles were tense now. His gaze seemed gauging the doors and windows as though he hoped by a sudden spring to elude us and escape.

Both Dr. French and I were still armed. Dr. French held his automatic in hand. I drew mine out, too. Our prisoner suddenly sat up with a jerk, propped on one elbow. Our muzzles were leveled at him. He eyed them sardonically, and suddenly he spoke.

"But, I say, you're not taking any chances, are you?"

It was the physical voice of Foley, which I had never heard. But the intonation, the slant of the phraseology, the accent, the tempo, were British. All those blended nuances which go to

make up a vocal personality — all of them were familiar! George Francis Bacon! I could not miss it.

I burst out, "I know him! Dr. French, it's George Bacon! Our visitor —"

Dr. French echoed me, "That's who it is! This time you're going to answer our questions!"

"Am I?"

"By God, you are!" Dr. Gregg roared.

OUR CAPTIVE was still upon his elbow, tensed, eyeing us closely. "Clever, absolutely clever, aren't you?" He was ironic. "I think I shall go to sleep. Tomorrow, maybe, if you treat me kindly, I will feel more like talking."

We were pressing close upon him, but Dr. Gregg waved us back, all save young Dr. May. "You stay close, May. We'll make him talk."

Dr. May took my weapon, and stood with it leveled.

"Now then," said Gregg, "are you George Bacon? You who originally were killed in a motor accident in London some years ago?"

No answer. Nothing but that defiant leer.

"Well, we'll start making you talk," Dr. Gregg declared grimly. "A little physical pain. May! Give him a prod in the ribs for a starter. He's in good shape to feel physical pain."

He winced as the muzzle

jabbed him. "Again, May! Will you talk now?"

"No!"

"Harder, May!"

"I won't talk, I tell you! I talked too much before. I was a fool! The damned body of that Spaniard — it was no good. Too sick! It wouldn't let me think clearly. I told too much, but I'm all right now. You can't make me talk! I won't tell you anything more."

"Oh, you won't? We'll see about that!"

A sudden memory struck me; a realization. This was our third encounter with George Bacon! I gripped Dr. French, where we were standing near the wall of the room.

"Doctor, remember Torelli — the body of Torelli, dying of pneumonia as we bent over him in the Maple Grove Cemetery? Think back. Remember how his voice sounded? There was something about it like this fellow's."

"You're right," whispered Dr. French. "I believe you're right! That was this same George Bacon!"

"Again, May! Break his ribs if you have to!"

It came with a horrible startling suddenness upon us all. I saw Dr. May leaning down menacingly, and jabbing with his automatic into the prisoner's ribs. Dr. Gregg was a step behind them. I saw that there was a sudden scuffle. The writhing, protesting body had raised a

hand and seized Dr. May's hand where it gripped the weapon which was pressed tightly into the prisoner's side.

The thing, coming all in an instant, could hardly have been avoided. It was a surprise — so unnatural an attack. All Dr. May's instinct, when he felt the hand gripping his, was to hold the weapon against his antagonist's ribs.

We heard Dr. May cry out, "No you don't! I've got you!"

Too swift, too brief a scuffle for any of us to move.

The prisoner shouted, "Trapped me? Fools! You think I can't escape you?"

The automatic roared with a report deafening in the narrow confines of the room. Dr. May jerked back, horrified with the realization that the fingers gripping his had pulled the trigger. The shot tore upward through the chest. The body fell back, and lay motionless on the table slab. In the pajama-clad side a great hole was burned in the fabric, with torn flesh under it. From a horrible jagged bullet hole, blood was welling out. The bullet, tearing upward and across, had pierced the heart.

The body was dead. The captive had escaped us.

And upon the heels of this horror came one infinitely greater! For several minutes we had been in noisy commotion here in the operating room. But we were stricken now into a horri-

fied silence. And in that momentary lull a groan sounded. Not here, but muffled, through the connecting closed door to the adjoining room.

Anne was in there, with the two nurses! In the tenseness of the past ten minutes, none of us had thought of Anne.

A cry burst from me. "What's that?"

I was the first to reach that door. Flinging it open, I rushed in — and stopped, frozen with horror.

Upon the floor Miss Blake lay dying, her white uniform ripped and stabbed and crimson with blood. Beside her was the body of the other, younger nurse, her white face staring at me; there was a slash across the throat, half severing the head so that it seemed to dangle grotesquely. . . .

And Anne was gone!

IX

THE HOUR THAT followed this discovery was to me the most torturing interval of my life. The body of Foley which had so engaged our attention was inert beyond any possibility of reanimation, and no one in the hospital gave it another glance or thought. Miss Cory, the younger nurse, was dead; Miss Blake died within a few minutes after we reached her. But she had a moment of consciousness and gasped out to us

that a man had been hiding in the room. He had attacked the nurses, seized Anne, knocked her unconscious with a blow of his fist and disappeared with her through the window.

Anne had seemed to recognize him! She had gasped, "Kent! You, Kent!" just as he struck her.

Miss Blake told us that with her dying words. So Kent Cavendish was the murderer? No, not Kent — his body merely. The man whom I had encountered packing Kent's clothes that night in Kent's bedroom; and whom I had fed in Mrs. Green's kitchen. And who had threatened my life, and threatened Anne! The man who talked with English phrases a hundred years out of date!

My imagination flung to encompass it all. This man — this Ego — with his antiquated English may have lived in the American Revolutionary War period. He had died and become a wanderer — a lost soul. And now he had come back, and had stolen this body of Kent Cavendish.

Was it a form of reincarnation? Was it something abnormal, unusual, yet consistent with laws of nature which we do not understand and thus term supernatural? Are all supernatural, occult events, wholly scientific save that we do not understand the laws of science governing them?

Half a dozen Egos, or ten, at the most — usurping wanderers from the void — had suddenly found some power to seize these dead bodies and reanimate them. Most of the victims had died natural deaths here on Earth within the past week — Torelli and Juan Fernando, for instance. The invading Egos had seized these shells, reanimated them for a time, and found, in the case of Torelli, that the deceased body was worse than useless, impossible to maintain alive.

But Kent Cavendish and young Foley had not died natural deaths. Had they been killed? Had these usurping Egos found a way of striking Kent and Foley, forcing them to yield up their human houses — their bodies — strong and free from disease? It seemed so.

The Ego of Foley, weak perhaps, and unable to fight, was whirled away and lost. But the Ego of Kent was putting up a fight. Dispossessed, confused, tortured — nevertheless, all that was the real Kent Cavendish was here now, somewhere, fighting, struggling to get back into his own body, perhaps? But the usurper who had that body — who had just stabbed the two nurses and stolen Anne — was evidently too powerful. Or, perhaps, he was too firmly entrenched within the healthy human shell which had belonged to Kent.

THE EGO OF George Bacon was more of a weakling. I could envisage in this unseen drama that Bacon, in the whirling void of Nothingness — perhaps the halfway place between Life and the Eternal Hereafter — had planned all this. Perhaps he had gathered about him this little band of insurgent restless Egos.

Bacon, remembering his enemy, Kent, had seized upon him. And then the stronger Ego had ousted Bacon and possessed Kent's body for himself. George Bacon had tried the pneumonia-ridden shell of Torelli. He had held it for a little time, but lost it when its mechanism, too shattered by disease, had again failed.

Then Bacon had taken the body of Juan Fernando; a bullet from a policeman had ended that tenancy! Then Bacon had come to the body of Foley. But here, the Ego of Kent had disputed the occupation, and Kent, for a moment, had won the struggle. He had found a human voice to use to tell Anne what had happened.

Then Bacon had flung him away, and we had let Bacon establish himself firmly in Foley's body. The physicians would have tortured him to make him tell us where these reanimated corpses were hiding. But Bacon had escaped the trap by committing suicide. . . .

"Rollins! What's the matter with you?"

I lifted my head at Dr. French's question, jerked out of whirling thoughts.

"Nothing," I stammered. "I'm all right, Doctor. Just the shock of it — Anne gone. No news yet?"

"No. But there will be. He must have been carrying her. Couldn't get far. All Walsh's men are out. We'll have a report any minute."

"But just to sit here —"

"I know. All your instinct, mine, too, is to rush around. We did that — half an hour ago."

WE WERE still in the Summit Hill Hospital. It was quieting now after the first wild turmoil. We had searched every corner of it, and the grounds. Dr. French and I then had taken his car and sped over all the quiet neighborhood. But to no purpose, and we had telephoned everywhere we could think to call. Walsh's man, McGuire, was still at Mrs. Green's. All was quiet there. We had telephoned to neighboring towns. Traffic men at the main road intersections were warned; every nearby town sent out a squad on motorcycles.

There seemed nothing we could do but sit in the hospital and wait. It was now nearly three A.M. of a fairly clear, windless, moonlit night, with a haze in the air making a dankness

and thin fog which lay in strata where the land was low. The Summit Hill Hospital, mis-named, was in a hollow, at the edge of the village. Open country lay near it, woods and fields and broken hilly uplands were no more than a mile away. So many places where a murderer with his captive could hide on a night like this.

Walsh had arrived and made the usual police investigation. Whatever the unseen, supernatural events, once these invading Egos took human bodies, they were subject to human laws. That, at least, we knew; and their actions of necessity were of the sort with which Walsh and his men could cope. The man who was using the body of Kent had evidently come here, perhaps early in the evening to watch the death and reanimation of Foley. He had stolen into that room adjoining the operating room, and had hid there. He had escaped by the window with Anne, a drop of only a few feet to the ground. Kent's body was large and extremely powerful; Anne was small and slight, and easily carried. Or perhaps there had been a car, with another of these usurpers lurking nearby.

Somewhere, within a few miles of here, we all believed, this band of semi-humans must be lurking. Living bodies, diseased or healthy, must be fed, clothed and housed. The burg-

laries had been raids to secure food and clothing and the little necessary equipment to maintain human life.

But where were the outlaws hiding? The country had been ransacked, yet even over these few square miles of lowlands, villages, and wooded mountains, it was obvious there must be many places as yet unfound. To this lair Anne would be taken; that, too, seemed reasonable. Doubtless she was there already, and the thought turned me cold with terror.

I huddled against Dr. French as we sat alone and silently waited in this little hospital room. I recalled how the eyes of Kent with the light of the Ego from a hundred years ago had gazed at me in Mrs. Green's kitchen as he mentioned Anne.

These were facts not quite to be denied. And with them, inextricably mingled, was the drama of the unseen. Kent, the real Kent, had been around me all this night, and was cognizant of all these terrors. He had tried to warn me against letting our midnight visitor go. He had gained the body of Foley and told Anne something of all this. Perhaps he had even told her where our antagonists were hiding. That knowledge was lost to us now, for Anne, too, was gone. But the Ego of Kent perhaps knew where!

I tensed at the thought. Kent

knew where Anne was now! I gripped the thought. I murmured in my heart, "Oh, Kent! Tell me! Guide me!"

WHO CAN fathom the mysteries of the Unknown? Was it desperation of the struggling Ego of Kent, or my own despairing struggle, or both? Or was it the bond between us, our friendship; our love for Anne — the bond now so intensified in our despair that we could bridge the gap between the living and the dead?

Whatever the reason, I felt now with startling clearness the *effect* of the unfathomable cause. A strange, unnamable feeling gripped me; a sudden wild hope; a sudden psychic knowledge that Kent was here with me. A feeling that he knew where Anne was and wanted to tell me.

"Rollins! Good God, don't look like that! What's the matter with you?"

I must have been staring as though at a vision.

"Dr. French!" I hung to his arm. "Of all the world, if the spirit of Kent is here, he can best communicate with me. And he's trying! I know it! I can feel it!"

"Rollins!"

"I can, Doctor!"

"Does he know where Anne is? Can you —"

"That's it! That's what I feel. Almost the knowledge. I'm at

the brink, the knowledge is here, just beyond me."

I was reaching with extended arms, as though here before me were something which I could physically grasp.

"Try, Rollins! Close your eyes. Think hard. Kent Caven-dish, if you can only give us this knowledge!"

Dr. French had his arm about my shoulders. He, too, was staring; his murmured voice was intense, pleading. "Kent Caven-dish, give us this knowledge! To your friend here, fight to give it. Make him understand." ..

All this was so intangible! Ignorant people, striving for the Unknown by instinct rather than reason, must perforce endow the intangible spirit across the void with a human shape, to personify it and try to make it real. And so they think they see a ghost, a wraith, a spectral shape; and hear a hollow sepulchral voice talking words they can understand.

But this now was a feeling within me, vague, indescribable, yet shining clear as the stirring of one's own spirit. . . . I stood upon the brink of knowledge. One may try and recall the details of a faded dream with quite a similar feeling.

"Dr. French, I — I —"

Almost — but not quite! I could sense the struggling Kent beyond the brink. I thought he had given me the knowledge; I thought I had it.

"Dr. French, I —"

But there were no words to fit the fading thoughts. Even the thoughts dimmed and blurred and were gone.

And it seemed then that he must have flung me something so that it held an instant in my mind and I could gasp it out.

"River Road!"

"Rollins! What's that?"

"River Road, doctor! Why, you know the River Road!"

IT WAS NO more than a vague consciousness that the River Road was important for me to ponder. As one often says of an inexplicable enlightenment, it "just popped into my head." There was nothing but those two words, "River Road," yet a surge of triumph swept me.

I jumped to my feet. The impression was strong that Kent had receded and was urging me away. Then he seemed coming back, disappointed that I was still here; then receding again urging me away.

"Dr. French, it concerns the River Road!" We both knew the road, which branched from the highway a few miles from here and wound up into the mountains following the course of a little river. "It concerns the River Road, Doctor! I know it now. Your car is outside."

He caught me by the shoulders. "Just what do you mean?"

Shall we tell Dr. Gregg, and see if —"

"No! No!"

I could feel the urge of haste. And it seemed as though I was alone in the night, speeding closer to the scene of where Anne must be. I felt that more detailed knowledge would come to me.

"No!" I gasped. "You drive me, Doctor! Get me there. I'll know what to do — where to go when we get on the River Road. I feel it. If you should want help, we can find a house up that way and telephone back. Kent will be with us; he's trying now to make us hurry!"

It chanced that there was no one in the cross hall of the hospital which led to the side entrance where Dr. French's car was parked. Within a minute we were in the car and away, Dr. French driving over the empty, moonlit road with furious speed. His automatic was in his lap; mine was in my hand. I slumped in the low seat, staring at our headlights as their beams swayed over the ribbon of road which reeled beneath us.

And it seemed that in the moonlight, overhead, the spirit of Kent was riding the night, urging us on.

X

"WAIT, DOCTOR! Just where are we? Halfway up?"

I felt that we should stop, and go no farther. I had a sudden apprehension that we might go too far.

"The road to the mill is right ahead," Dr. French had slowed up. With abrupt decision, I snapped off the headlights, and we came, in a moment, to a silent stop.

"Halfway up, you say, Doctor?"

I no more than whispered it; and he whispered back, "About that. The road to the mill is a hundred feet ahead."

The mill! It set my heart wildly pounding. It seemed significant. I had not thought of the mill, but now it seemed most important of all the places in the world.

The River Road was no more than six or eight miles long. It left the valley highway and followed the winding course of the little torrent; it rose perhaps a thousand feet, topped the mountain ridge, and descended on the other side. It was no more than a small, winding road, most of it set upon the side of the hundred-foot gorge through which the little river tumbled in its downward course. A Western setting in miniature, curiously wild and out of place here in the East, so near the small suburban towns.

It seemed especially desolate and remote this night. We had not passed a car. The moonlight shone on the silent wood-

ed hillsides. The river tumbled with a white splashing murmur at the bottom of its little ravine. There was a white mist down there hanging in stratas.

The road at the point where we stopped, had left the gorge momentarily and was a hundred yards or so away from its upper rim. A broken, unimproved road, dangerous for automobiles, turned to the left just ahead of us, descending steeply into a break in the ravine down to where there was a small river dam and the decrepit ruins of an old mill half hidden in the woods. It was a picturesque landmark here; well known, and on Sunday afternoons, much photographed by passing motorists.

"The mill, Doctor! That's it!"

"You mean — Anne is there?"

"Something about the mill. I don't know what I mean. It's the mill, there's only the mill in my mind, nothing else."

We climbed noiselessly from the car. The road, the steeply sloping hillside and the declivity leading down to the river were all deeply wooded, heavy with black shadows brightened by occasional patches of moonlight. In the silence we stood peering, listening to the distant splash of the water where it went over the broken spillway of the dam.

I whispered tensely, "It may be they are in the mill. That's all I can think of."

I murmured, "Kent, can't you

tell me? Give me some ideal?"

Perhaps he did tell me. Who can say?

"Dr. French, let's creep down there. Perhaps, if they are there, we'll see a light."

"But this place was searched a week ago by Walsh."

"If they were not here then, could they not have selected this since? Doctor, come."

WE WERE BOTH gripping our weapons. For a moment Dr. French hesitated. He whispered, "That house down at the foot of the hill, hardly a mile from here — I was thinking if we telephoned we could have half a dozen men here on motorcycles in —"

"No! Too long to wait!"

"I think so. I just don't like to rush into anything without considering." He gripped me, whispering with his mouth near my ear. "We'll have a look at the mill. But above everything, there must be no alarm. They would kill Anne if we openly attack."

"That's why we don't want men on motorcycles."

"Exactly. I realize it."

But was anything — anyone — here? We could only hope that we might be able to determine that, and still not be discovered. If Anne were here, the least attack from us might cause them to kill her at once.

I whispered it.

"Exactly," the doctor agreed.

"They may not be armed with more than knives. If we could determine that, Rollins —" His swift whisper was vehement. "If the worst comes, shoot swiftly. Shoot them as you would rats! It's our best chance, and there may be only a few of them."

I started forward, but again he checked me. "Wait! Something I want to get out of the car."

I saw him fumble in his little medicine case and then stuff something in his pocket. He caught up with me. "Do you know this place?"

"Yes. I've been here two or three times." I had been inside the old mill within a year.

"We shouldn't go down the road. Lead us through the woods. Take it slowly, Rollins. No noise! And keep out of this accursed moonlight."

We went up nearly to the intersection of the little branch road; then I turned us off and we went down into the woods. It was a steep, broken descent, and the climb down was slow. The splash of the river grew louder. I blessed the sound which might cover any noise we might make. The trees were heavy with late spring foliage, and the underbrush was thick.

"Easy, Rollins! Not so fast! I can't go so fast without noise."

It took us a full ten minutes. I could feel the growing dampness of the mist which lay in the hollow.

I stopped. The river gorge had a broken side here. We were almost down at the river level, below the dam. Through the underbrush and trees, the mill showed fifty feet before us. It was a low, oblong, stone building, tumbled apart by the ravages of time. Half of one side had fallen and the roof was wholly gone. The window openings, what was left of them, showed as black squares. From the angle where we stood, the little dam was visible, with the water spilling over its broken top where part of the framework still stood holding the decrepit wheel. Trees hung close over these falling ruins, and the crumbling fallen blocks of stone were half covered by an encroaching tangle of underbrush.

We stood gazing. By day it was a peaceful, picturesque vista, a memory of bygone times. But now, half swallowed in darkling shadows and brightened by moonlight patches an aura of evil seemed hanging upon it. There was an almost motionless layer of fog hanging down here like a suspended veil; and as we watched, a faint breath of wind stirred it so that it waved and swirled.

Silent, eery ruins. Was anyone here? No lights showed, we heard no sound save the splash of the river.

Dr. French whispered, "No one is there. Or at least, not with any light. We'll see —"

I THOUGHT suddenly of the space under the mill. It had been a sort of cellar. Above it, with the roof gone, the place was open disclosing a litter of broken stones and rotting machinery of the mill partly covered by vines and a tangle of underbrush. But underneath, at the level of the bottom of the dam, I recalled that there was a lower space, still almost intact. Facing this way there was only the moldering blank base of the building's side walls.

"Doctor, the lower room! That's where they must be!"

It seemed that I knew they were here. I recalled a broken trap-door in the center of the upper portion, which led down underneath. But that was no good; we would be discovered. And I recalled that at the base of the dam there was a little door which also gave access to the dungeon-like cellar.

I whispered, "We can cross here to the edge of the river, and then reach the bottom of the dam on this side. There's a lower entrance. I can find it. We won't be seen."

"Try it, Rollins," said Dr. French.

Another ten minutes went by. We reached the river edge and came up along it. The fog lay dank and thick upon us with the moonlight shining overhead and the nearby mill showing like a specter through the veil. We came to the lower mill corner,

pushing through the underbrush which grew close against it. The blank lower wall was green with mossy mold. As we reached the base of the dam, the falling water was almost a roar.

It was dark and dank here; green slippery rocks were underfoot. I made out the small door-entrance. It was a nearly square opening, some four feet high. The heavy, square-beamed wooden casement was worm-eaten and partially gone. The door had long since vanished, but the two huge iron hinges still were here, bent and dangling. The opening was littered and choked with a tangle of vines.

We came cautiously up to it. The vines hid the interior. We listened, but there was no sound save the falling water behind us.

Dr. French drew me against him. We were both standing, our guns in hand.

I murmured, "There's a short lower passageway, but we can't see in from here."

"We'll have to go in?"

"Yes."

We cautiously shoved the vines aside. We crept in, almost abreast of each other. Was anything here? But now I knew there was. The little tunnel was black, dank and fetid with the smell of fog and wet earth, but I knew something living was in here.

The fog seemed to follow in

after us. I saw the faintest glimmer of what might be a light; a glow; then the tunnel turned an angle. The dank and moldy grotto under the mill opened before us.

There were lights, three or four guttering candles, flickering with the stirring air so that monstrous misshapen shadows swayed on the littered stone floor and up the slimy walls. Across from us — it was not more than fifty feet — the opposite wall was broken near the top with a rift which admitted a faint moonlight shaft, adding its light to the candles.

We stood hardly breathing, staring at the scene. In the candlelight I saw a little huddled group of human figures — eight in all. Three were eating, crouching like animals, silently eating and pulling at each other in dispute over the food. Two others were huddled in blankets. One lay apparently dead. The moonlight struck the face, showed an expression of death-agony frozen there.

BUT ANNE? I had not seen her at first. There was a shadow, but one of the figures moved and let the candlelight past, and then I saw her. She was seated on a blanket; seated tense with white terrified face and staring eyes. And beside her, partly beyond her, was the seated body of Kent Cavendish! But not Kent now; this was a murder-

ous Ego which had lived a hundred years ago! He had a knife in his hand, the knife doubtless, with which he had murdered the two nurses. He was wiping it on his shirt; he showed it to Anne and laughed.

Gruesome little band of outlaws huddled here underground. All of them were corpses, mere shells of humans, reanimated now by these usurping unnamable things from the void of the Unknown. Gruesome in thought, worse than gruesome in actuality. The disease of which these bodies had so recently died was stamped plainly upon them now. All of them were tortured, harassed by physical distress and pain. All would die very soon undoubtedly; this human existence which they had usurped was worse than useless to them. And there was one body which had been dead too long before the reanimation took place. The tissue decay had set in. I saw it huddled, with the candlelight on its face. A face with the nose missing . . . leprous.

All of them, worse than dead. . . . But the one who had Kent's body was in no distress. He reached over, put an arm around Anne's shoulders and laughed again.

XI

WE WERE within twenty feet of the nearest figures. We

had not been discovered. The sound of the water was muffled in here, but it was enough to overwhelm any noise we had made. And we were beyond the candlelight.

I put my mouth near Dr. French's ear. "We can shoot them all — all but the body of Kent. It is too close to Anne; we've got to wait."

I could feel him nod. There was nothing we could do; a step or two farther and we would raise the alarm. A volley from our automatics would kill all those huddled things, but Kent's body was partly behind Anne. We could not chance it. A slash of that murderous knife would kill her.

But if we waited? This thing was holding Anne against it in the hollow of its arm. The face which had been Kent's was bending down whispering to her.

I murmured, with a voiceless murmur, "Oh, Kent, if the spirit of you is here, tell me what to do!"

Was Kent's spirit here? It seemed as though it must be here. I murmured, "What should we do, Kent? Oh, can't you do something?"

Dr. French and I, standing frozen in the darkness, helpless to move save possibly to retreat, were suddenly aware of a faint current of air from behind us. A draft was coming in the lit-

tle tunnel, drifting the width of this dungeon room and passing out through the rift in the opposite wall. And we saw over our heads that the fog was floating in from the river. A wisp of it went swirling out into the candlelight.

WAS IT MY wild fancy? The vapor, yellowed by the candlelight, seemed coiling upon itself in mid-air. My fancy? But Dr. French saw the same, for he clutched at me and I could feel his gesture. A yellow-white swirl of fog, rolled almost into a spectral shape.

The miserable little group of semi-humans all saw it, and, as though stricken, they were all staring. Did they see more than we could see? Did that wisp of fog mean more to them than it did to us? One of them suddenly screamed, "I'm afraid! I'm afraid!"

The body of Kent Cavendish dropped Anne and leaped up. "You fools! Be quiet!" It moved a step away from her toward the center of the room. The wisp of fog was hanging some ten feet from the floor.

My heart leaped with the realization that I could shoot now.

"Doctor —"

He whispered swiftly, "Just a chance. If he — it — comes closer, we'll try to capture, not to kill. A chance — Gregg told me. If we can get the body of

Kent Cavendish — try not to harm it irreparably!"

We would have opened fire then, I think, but again we were stricken. The spectral shape of the fog did not drift on, but had turned and was coming toward us.

"I'm afraid." The chorus of gruesome cries had not stopped.

"You fools!"

The body of Kent flailed an arm to dispel the swirl of fog; but he could not reach it. And the white shape floated toward us, with the body of Kent following it, trying to reach it.

Had the draft of air changed to turn the pallid layer of fog back? Or was this a visible wraith of the spirit of Kent, luring Kent's body near me so that I could attack?

How uncrossable *is* the void between the living and the dead?

I murmured, "You handle the others," and in a moment I leaped. The body of Kent had approached within ten feet of me, and now I struck it, and we went down together, rolling on the ground. I was aware of Dr. French coming to help me, and then that the corpses were rushing him. And in a moment, yellow spurts of flame darted over me from his automatic. A swift volley, a few horrible screams, then silence.

I was rolled momentarily on top of my antagonist. I saw the

fallen figures; and I saw Anne backed alone against the wall with her hands pressed against her livid face.

The body of Kent was on top of me in an instant. I had swung the automatic, but it was knocked away. The knife came at me with a slash; I caught the wrist, but could not hold it. The body of Kent was so strong! I recalled as the knife came down, how Kent had always been able to defeat me at rough and tumble wrestling.

I turned the knife from my chest, but it went into my shoulder like a stab of white heat. I felt it twisting, coming out again . . . And I was aware of Dr. French bending over us. He gripped the body of Kent and held something against the face. I smelled chloroform, and felt the body go limp in my grasp. It sank back unconscious, ripping the knife from me as it fell.

A white-hot pain in my shoulder encompassed all the world. . . . And after an interval I was aware of Dr. French and Anne leaning over me.

I could hear his voice! "You saved Kent's body for us! We've got it, unharmed. By God, that took courage."

And Anne's voice: "Oh, Jack dear —"

After another interval, I could feel Dr. French trying to stem the blood flowing from my shoulder.

"Not so serious, lad. You'll be

all right, but it hurts like hell, doesn't it?"

And I sank again into a void where there was nothing but that white-hot pain. . . .

XII

I HAVE LITTLE more to recount. One may guess, and let his fancy run.

But there are a few more facts. I was not seriously hurt. I was at the Maple Grove Hospital when the unconscious, still-drugged body of Kent was laid out for the examination of the physicians. It was unharmed, living with that Ego of the usurper within it.

Then after a few hours they moved the body to Kent's bedroom in Mrs. Green's — familiar surroundings for the bodiless spirit of Kent. Perhaps the spirit was with us again. Who can say? And if it were, it wanted these familiar surroundings, this familiar environment to help it in the coming struggle.

Would science restore Kent? Dr. Gregg said fervently. "I can only try."

The drugs he injected into the bloodstream of the body were neither mysterious nor unusual. The heart was depressed, slowed and almost stilled. The respiration became so faint it could hardly be detected. The face was white and placid, as though the sleep of death were here. The body was in a state

of suspended animation, almost death. This usurping Ego was driven by science into almost a forced vacating of this house.

Dr. Gregg and an assistant sat on each side of the bed, one with a stethoscope, the other with fingers on the pulse. A third physician had other hypodermics ready.

By the head of the recumbent body Anne and I sat together. Dr. Gregg had wanted us. He told us to sit here and plead with our hearts and minds, plead to the spirit of Kent to come back and take his human shell from this invader. Dr. Gregg presently would completely stop the heart. Death? Call it that. There would be a moment when the house would be vacant and the invader driven out. There would be a struggle. Kent could struggle then for possession of his own, aided by science. There would be a quick stimulant for the heart, a shock which might reanimate it — might make all the complicated human mechanisms resume their functions which only for a brief moment had been checked.

And then some Ego would be here. The murderous usurper, or Kent? No one could say. But Dr. Gregg wanted Anne and me, whom Kent loved most deeply, to be here and plead, to add the force of our wills to help his fight.

I gazed at the calm bloodless face. I saw the surgeon make

the injection into the arm vein.

Dr. Gregg was bending tensely down with his stethoscope. Dead! Death was here.

"Quickly, Dr. May!"

The strong healthy heart of this body responded. Perhaps, without the impulse from within of an arriving tenant, it would not have responded. No one will ever know. But it started again; and with it, all its allied intricate machinery. Life!

Had there been a struggle in that moment when the house was vacant? The calm, white exterior gave no evidence of what desperate encounter may have taken place within.

Another long interval, with the physicians using all their skill to help. Then Dr. Gregg sighed. "That is all we can do. We can give him consciousness in an hour. Then we will know."

An hour? It seemed an eternity. But the drugs gradually wore off. The engine throbbed more strongly. Whoever was here had a firm tenancy now.

The body moved! Other endless minutes. . . . Dr. Gregg said gently, "Anne, you sit by him. I want him to see you."

"Yes. Yes, Doctor."

And at last the eyes opened, roved vacantly; and then, with the light of reason in them, fastened upon Anne.

And the lips moved. "Anne"

Was it Kent?

Anne bent lower. "Kent, dear."

"Anne."

The hands came weakly up, fumbling at her shoulders; then the fingers brushed her face, touched her hair, caressingly. "Anne — dear —"

"Oh, Kent, it's you!"

"Anne, have I — have I been very sick? I'm better now. I feel better."

Kent! It was Kent, here again with us.

"I'm better, Anne. Don't cry. I'm going to get well."

His arms drew her protectingly down as she burst into wild sobs and clung to him.

WITHIN A day Kent was

well upon the road to normal recovery. What had he to tell of all this? There was nothing in his memory. Only one thing was in Kent's consciousness: that moment when in the body of Foley he had a brief human existence.

The strange incidents were over. Whatever caused them, who can say? The invading band of Egos had had their trial and failed; and could not, or did not dare try again. Was it an abnormality, scientific enough, if only we could fathom the natural laws which were at work? Dr. Gregg thinks so.



When we announced in our May 1964 issue that we were opening up a new running contest for readers, offering a free copy (or one-issue extension of subscription) to any and all readers whose lists of story rating shows the top five items in the order in which a majority finally places them, we expected to start issuing prizes as soon as the polls on the May issue were closed.

Apparently, it is not as easy a matter as we thought; since then, three issues have been rated, but not a single ballot has shown the top five in that final order. It suggests that we were too stingy with the prize offered, under the circumstances; so we're raising it to a six-issue subscription, or extension of subscription with this issue.

We expect, of course, that you will rate the stories as you see them, and thus no skill is involved. But if enough of you keep sending in ballots issue after issue, sooner or later some reader (and we hope more than one) is going to get a nice bonus for the trouble he took in speaking his mind.

It Is Written . . .

As we prepare this copy for the printer, the November issue has just appeared on sale, and only one letter from you, the readers, has reached us. David Charles Paskow writes from Philadelphia, Penna., "Starting from the cover, the November MOH is an improvement over its predecessors (although I still like your original logotype better); the red against shadings of maroon, blue and black had a haunting appeal.

"Your letter column is handled exceptionally well as are your introductions. It has been a trying first volume for you, I realize, and as far as I am concerned, your achievement is one to be proud of.

"I like your 'coming next issue' feature — much better than an ordinary listing of titles."

We cannot say anything conclusive here about your reactions to the new cover approach, but a few readers have expressed the wish that we present complete letters in *It Says Here*, rather than excerpts. This we are reluctant to do, since while the full contents of each and every letter is of definite interest to the editor, this is not necessarily true for general reader interest. Rating lists of stories, or lists of suggestions for reprint (sometimes duplicates of other readers' lists) are likewise of great value to us — but would not, we feel, be of equal interest to our readers. Again, it often happens that several readers will raise the same point or issue in their letters; such repetition helps us, but would not do anything for the readers' column except to extend its length — and a majority of you heard from have made it clear that, while you approve of a short letter department, you do not want this to crowd out stories. This would be inevitable, at times, were we to offer a representative selection of complete letters.

Very tardily, we wish to thank Richard Kyle, who took the pains to draw up a sample of type and layout for the cover logo of our September issue, which is being continued on our contents page.

C. L. Saricks, of Lawrence, Kansas, writes: ". . . I do not like the new way you staple cover to body of the magazine — it cheapens the appearance, putting a relatively high-class publication, at first sight, into the category of the cheap pulps. I am in favor of your returning to your old method of binding.

"Also I was disturbed at . . . a ridiculous discrepancy in *The House of the Worm*, in which we are led to believe that Art is telling the story in the first person. Suddenly, on page 60, halfway down the first column, Art is speaking to the first person. Surely this could not have been an error on the part of author Prout. Shame!"

The editorial face is a luminous crimson, Friend Saricks, for even if the error was in the copy from which we worked, it should have been caught and corrected in the proofs. We have not checked back to the original, since such a slip on the author's part would in no way excuse us. The shame is ours alone.

Will Orlando writes from Long Island: "I was somewhat taken aback when I saw the new binding on *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, but after trying it I think I like it better. The magazine is easier to read. It stays open better and I'm the magazine-gripper type. With the more conventional sort of binding I

often find myself pulling the pages of a copy out of shape, because the inside column is sometimes too close to the binding, and sometimes I find I've pulled the pages away from the staple. The paper used in the February — oldstyle binding — and May issues wasn't very good, but the September is a real improvement and I hope you can stick with paper at least as good as this. I sort of miss the backbone, but the greater ease in reading with this sort of binding (and you find it on some very high-class publications, READERS' DIGEST was like this until they got too bloated) makes up for not having a spine with issue identification on it."

We haven't received enough comment on the new binding vis-a-vis the old to make any sort of estimate on how most of you feel, but comment we have received shows that some prefer it and some do not.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the story *Cassius*," writes Miss Monica M. Turk of 522 W. Bruce St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204.

"The author really has a wonderful, vivid imagination. Wish I could write as well as Mr. Henry Whitehead. Also I liked *House of the Worm, Bones*, and *Five-Year Contract*."

"Please have some more stories by Dr. Whitehead in your magazine. *The Black Beast* sounds intriguing. So does *Black Terror*. You couldn't by any chance give me his present address, could you? Being a writer myself, I'd like to correspond with someone interested in science fiction and the supernatural."

The Rev. Dr. Whitehead died in 1932, so we're not in a position to give you his current address. If some reader who owns a copy of the first Whitehead collection, *Jumbee and Other Stories*, would be so kind as to loan it to us, we'll happily consider *The Black Beast* for future use. We have copies of the other Whitehead stories that have been suggested, but either have not read *The Black Beast*, or do not remember it.

"Congratulations," writes J. Gregory from New York City, "the bizarre, the gruesome, and frightening" are back with *aplomb*. . . . The quality of your stories is excellent and shows great source, which is half the battle in this genre of literature. The blending of some 'newer' material is a necessary move to attempt at least in a furtherance of weird and strange tales and not be willing to succumb to the heretofore thought that all good horror has been written.

"However, with the exception of Tigrina's *Last Act: October*, Hatvany's *A Dream of Falling*, and more recently, Stephen Dentinger's *A Stranger Came To Reap*, I have found very little of quality about any of the newly-authored stories. Some, such as *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, though sentimentally adequate and sensitive, are rather amateurishly conceived; worst of all was Payes' *The Door*, and Lipton's *Hungary's Female Vampire* — real space-fillers if ever I've read some.

"The rest have been excellent, just beautifully chosen. Items such as Chambers' *Yellow Sign*, Keller's *Seeds of Death*, Wells' *Vision of Judgment*, Bierce's *One Summer Night*, Lovecraft's *Dreams in the Witch-House*, Whitehead's *Cassius*, along with Wollheim's *Bones*, have been your best."

While many readers agreed in essence with Riche Benjo, who writes about *The Ghostly Rental*, "Without doubt, this was the best story in the issue. The suspense is kept going all the way through, and the twists in the ending are well put to use", the opposition deserves its inning, too. Clayton A. Tomsicek of Owatonna, Minn., puts it in a manner we found as sprightly as it is contrary to our own feelings.

Continued on Page 126

Coming Next Issue

"... I hunted round at the back of the castle among the straggle of the office and presently found a long, fairly light ladder, though it was heavy enough for one, goodness knows! I thought at first that I should never get it reared. I managed at last and let the ends rest very quietly against the wall a little below the sill of the larger window. Then, going silently, I went up the ladder. Presently I had my face alone above the sill and was looking in, alone with the moonlight.

"Of course the queer whistling sounded louder up there, but it still conveyed that peculiar sense of something whistling quietly to itself — can you understand? Though for all the meditative lowness of the note, the horrible, gargantuan quality was distinct — a mighty parody of the human, as if I stood there and listened to the whistling from the lips of a monster with a man's soul.

"And then, you know, I saw something. The floor in the middle of the huge, empty room was puckered upwards in the center into a strange, soft-looking mound parted at the top into an everchanging hole that pulsed to that great, gentle hooning. At times, as I watched, I saw the heaving of the indented mound gap closer with a queer, inward suction as with the drawing of an enormous breath, then the thing would dilate and pout once more to the incredible melody. And suddenly as I stared, dumb, it came to me that the thing was living. I was looking at two enormous, blackened lips, blistered and brutal, there in the pale moonlight.

"Abruptly they bulged out to a vast pouting mound of force and sound, stiffened and swollen and hugely massive and clean-cut in the moonbeams. And a great sweat lay heavy on the vast upper-lip. In the same moment of time the whistling had burst into a mad screaming note that seemed to stun me, even where I stood, outside of the window. And then the following moment I was staring blankly at the solid, undisturbed floor of the room — smooth, polished stone flooring from wall to wall. And there was an absolute silence.

"You can picture me staring into the quiet Room and knowing what I knew. I felt like a sick, frightened child and I wanted to slide *quietly* down the ladder and run away. But in that very instant, I heard Tassoc's voice calling to me from within the Room for help, *help*. My God! but I got such an awful dazed feeling... And then the call came again and I burst the window and jumped in to help him. I had a confused idea that the call had come from within the shadow of the great fireplace and I raced across to it, but there was no one there."

*You will not want to miss this eerie novelet,
by a master of the uncanny.*

THE WHISTLING ROOM

by William Hope Hodgson

Continued from Page 124

"The following is an un-appreciation of *The Ghostly Rental*.

"If you are striving for a magazine that can cause a reader to shudder in remembrance of some ghastly yarn; or wince in horror as he views the table of contents, at least you have succeeded in that respect with me. I cannot describe the loathing and repulsion I felt as I saw that . . . that most insufferable horror on the contents page. 'What hideous blasphemy is this!' I shrieked, and a momentary cold wave of nausea swept over my trembling body. For there on that page, emblazoned in flaming letters, from which leapt tongues of fire that pierced my scorched eyeballs, was the byline: HENRY JAMES!

"Mortal reader can stand no more. With a cry of visceral anguish, the hated MOH fell from my enfeebled hand. I turned and fled in stark terror of that mass of crawling and twisting verbiage, a veritable spectre of dullness; but even as I tried to turn my mind from that loathsome gibbering monster that spewed forth rambling redundancy and padded drivels of a horribly nauseous prolixity, the ultimate horror rose before me: an old man with queerly distorted intellect, oddly garbed in the Cloak of Vapidity and wielding the Pen of Expiation. He was strangely employed in beating about a bush with the ornate Pen. And all the while he gave vent to certain peculiar oaths, 'My eyes and I were on excellent terms', 'the old college is pretty now, but it was prettier thirty years ago', and other like sayings which he seemed to set great store by. These final abominations were too much for my already severely-tried mind, and I fell senseless to the floor.

"I hope you will excuse the above outburst, if you are a James fan, but I couldn't resist a chance to avenge myself. It's not that I'm an illiterate, I've read a few James novels; but just that doing so nearly gave me a complex or two. Wells, Twain, Bierce, Kipling, *at*; James, *no*."

Edward Dong writes from Booklyn Polytechnic Institute, "There is one danger, as you point out, in your editorial policies — the possibility of reprinting a story that has been reprinted too much. Some of the finer stories from WEIRD TALES and its bretheren have suffered this fate. How about some stories — humorous — from old UNKNOWN WORLDS? Your magazine is specifically one of horror — How about adding some science fiction terror tales to your roster of Old Masters and weird fiction?"

We have already added the science fiction element, as you suggest, and we are puzzled by the comments of readers who urge us *not* to print science fiction, and then vote Laurence Manning's *Caverns Of Horror* as outstanding, or in first place. But not puzzled for long; the sense is clear: these readers do not want traditional science fiction with its rocket ships and technical explorations of sociology and the physical sciences. With this we concur; other publications cover this element well enough. . . . Without a checklist of weird, horror, and fantasy anthologies, we cannot help an occasional reprinting of a story which may have appeared in several of them — and can only hope that it does not happen often.

Elsewhere in this issue, we have a report on how your votes rated the stories in our November issue. Since "filler" copy can be sent off much later than this department, we decided not to try to include this feature with *It Says Here*, in order to give you the maximum voting time possible. We hope you will continue to let us know your preferences and to vote on as many stories in the issue as possible. RAWL

Subscription and Back Issue Page

You don't *have* to mutilate this magazine, or fill out a form, to subscribe to MAGAZINE OF HORROR, so long as you let us know which issue you want a subscription to start with, print your name and full address clearly, and enclose check or money order. But here is a form if you would like one. If you missed any back issue, all are available, and partial contents are listed below.

Aug. 1963: *The Man With A Thousand Legs* by Frank Belknap Long; *The Yellow Sign* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Unbeliever* by Robert Silverberg; *The Last Dawn* by Frank Lillie Pollock; *Babylon: 70 M.* by Donald A. Wollheim; *The Maze and the Monster* by Edward D. Hoch.

Nov. 1963: *Clarissa* by Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Space-Eaters* by Frank Belknap Long; *The Charmer* by Archie Binns; *The Faceless Thing* by Edward D. Hoch; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes* by Rudyard Kipling; *The Electric Chair* by George Waight.

Feb. 1964: *The Seeds of Death* by David H. Keller; *The Repairer of Reputations* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Place of the Pythons* by Arthur J. Burks; *The Seeking Thing* by Janet Hirsch; *They That Wait* by H. S. W. Chibbett; *Jean Bouchon* by S. Baring-Gould; *Luelia Miller* by Mary Wilkins-Freeman.

May 1964: *The Dreams in the Witch-House* by H. P. Lovecraft; *The Mark of the Beast* by Rudyard Kipling; *What Was It?* by Fitz-James O'Brien; *Beyond the Breakers* by Anna Hunger; *A Dream of Falling* by Attila Hatvany; *The Truth About Pycraft* by H. G. Wells; *Last Act: October* by Tigrina.

Sept. 1964: *Cassius* by Henry S. Whitehead; *The Ghostly Rental* by Henry James; *The House of the Worm* by Merle Prout; *Five-Year Contract* by J. Vernon Shea; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing* by Walt Liebscher; *Bones* by Donald A. Wollheim.

Nov. 1964: *Caverns of Horror* by Laurence Manning; *The Pacer* by August Derleth; *The Mask* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde* by Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Door To Saturn* by Clark Ashton Smith; *The Moth* by H. G. Wells; *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Jan. 1965: *The Shattered Room* by H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth; *The Thing From — Outside* by George Allan England; *The Phantom Farmhouse* by Seabury Quinn; *The Shadows on the Wall* by Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *A Way With Kids* by Ed M. Clinton; *Black Thing At Midnight* by Joseph Payne Brennan.

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Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

Please rate the stories in the order of your preference, as many as possible. Ties are always acceptable. If you thought a story was bad (rather than just last place), put an "X" beside it. If you thought a story was truly outstanding, above just first place, mark an "O" beside it. (Then the next-best would be "I".)

THE BLACK LAUGH

THE HAND OF GLORY

THE GARRISON

PASSEUR

ORPHEUS'S BROTHER

THE LADY OF THE VELVET COLLAR

JACK

THE BURGLAR-PROOF VAULT

THE DEAD WHO WALK

Comment:

A Thing of Beauty?

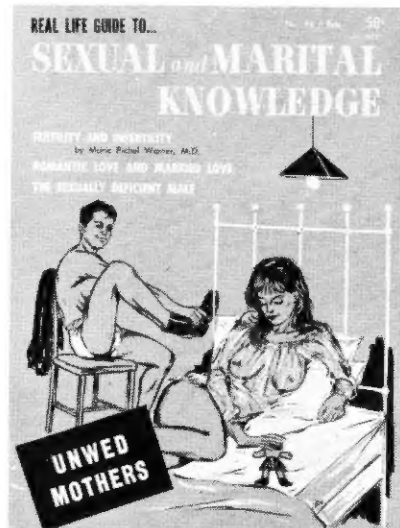
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